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ESS PUBLISHING COMPANY
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PARIS

TWO POEMS ON THE NEW YORK CENTRAL.

WHERE RUNS THE NEW YORK CENTRAL.

An original poem by one of the poets of the New York Sun, which has recently been going the rounds of the press.

I.

Where the mild Mohawk meanders,
Where the lakes and pleasant streams,
Among the vales and mountains,
Lie still in silver dreams;

II.

Where the touch of Nature's kindness
Comes down upon the earth,
To paint the smiling landscape
In scenes of radiant mirth;

III.

Of laughing brooks and meadows,
Where daisies come between
The sunshine and the shadow,
That glorify the green;

IV.

Where the mountains in the distance
Sleep silent all the day,
In purple robes of morning,
In twilight robes of gray;

V.

Where hamlet, town and city
Thrive as the green bay tree
Beneath the fostering care of
The only N. Y. C.

VI.

There every man is happy,
There every woman, blest—
They simply press the button,
The Central does the rest.

—WILLIAM J. LAMPTON.

WHERE?

A reply to an inquiry in verse by Mr. Wm. J. Lampton, one of the poets of the New York Sun, entitled "Where Runs the New York Central."

I.

Where the sleepers sleep in sleepers
Slipping o'er the sleepers (ties);
Where steel ribbons, smooth as velvet,
Scarcely kiss the wheel that flies;

II.

Where the smokeless, dustless, noiseless,
Jarless joys of life abound;
Where rare, costly cushioned comforts
All Day passengers surround;

III.

Where ability, civility,
Intelligence and worth
Provide nomadic pilgrims with
The grandest trains on earth;

IV.

Where, every hour of every day
Of every week, month, year,
The millions travel tranquilly,
Securely, without fear;

V.

Where river, woodland, mountain, lake,
Are kodaked on the mind;
Where "all the comforts of the home"
Are found—correct, refined.

VI.

There you'll find the New York Central—
The Colossus—King of Roads—
Knitting, welding men together,
Their affairs, hearts, modes, abodes.

—JON KERN.

In the A B C Pathfinder Railway Guide
for March, 1900.

"The New York Central leads the world."—*Leslie's Weekly*.

A MAIDEN DIPLOMAT

By L. H. Bickford

I

FROM the moment she left the carriage until she found herself listlessly surveying the crowd from the Trentons' opera box, the evening had offered nothing surprising to Camilla. There was an agreeable recollection that she had been through it all, and she was vaguely interested in recalling how many times, but presently gave up the task as unimportant. There was the little stretch of Broadway before the architecturally deplorable temple of melody, where the imported songsters received the homage due to an ever-ascendant Art; there was the outer rhythm of smooth-running wheels, with just the possibility of irritation in the stamping of steeds; the exhilarating crush at the entrances; the friendly babble of indiscriminate and fragmentary greetings, and the rustle of the throng down the various aisles into the boxes and stalls. Once the inner sanctuary was reached, there was a sense of gorgeousness and satisfaction in the *mise en scène*—a sense of the spectacular in the battle of brocades and furs and laces, and the inevitable showing of shoulders, with the gleam of jewels. These things never lost their interest for Camilla, who appreciated well enough that she was a part of them; but they had ceased to astonish her, even if there was ever a time when she entertained astonishment. Nor did the customary tardiness of some of her neighbors disconcert her, for she had a very good idea of who these neighbors would be, and that they would appear in evidence

with the fall of the curtain on the first act.

The Trentons were inclined to be vulgarly prompt, and to-night had actually arrived for the initial scene, so that Camilla's attention was for a time distracted from the actual performance in the auditorium to the mimic representation on the stage. Thus engaged, she was not aware of the quiet entrance of young Ferdinand Acton and his bestowal in the vacant chair just behind her; and not until the lights flamed up, amidst a burst of noisy acclaim, ending in the recall of the singers, did she look about and make the discovery. This, it appeared, was the propitious interval young Mr. Acton had been awaiting for some melodious minutes, and he gave a rapid and anxious glance at Mr. and Mrs. Trenton to assure himself that they were engrossed temporarily and that only Camilla could hear what he had to say. In the most deliberate manner in the world Ferdinand pulled his chair forward a little and whispered ten words in a strained voice. Having uttered them, he looked eagerly at Camilla's left cheek. She turned, gave him a doubtful glance, and then laughed.

"Now, Ferdie, whatever do you mean by that? I declare, you're blushing. Are you sincere?"

Young Mr. Acton twisted his hands nervously and appeared to be deserted of his suddenly acquired courage.

"Awfully, Camilla; I've been waiting to say it for a month. Ever since —"

"Ever since you were abandoned by the *chanson* charmer from abroad? Honestly, Ferdie, you haven't paid

me a compliment; I dislike being second choice, and I simply cannot compete with the music halls."

He cast a distressed look at the crowd below.

"Please don't talk that way—this isn't the same thing; every man does that at one time or another."

Camilla found herself bowing to somebody, somewhere, and smiling with conventional precision.

"Now tell me the truth, Ferdie, why did you select the end of the first act of 'Romeo and Juliet' to say this—and right down my back, at that? Who told you to do it?"

With the simple innocence of a child he pouted and observed:

"You might at least give me credit for originality."

"Not consistently, young man; the book wouldn't balance. Confess, now, you were put up to this—perhaps a wager, as in the *chanson* case, or a desire to break into theatricals?"

His appearance of grief deepened.

"You bombard me with questions," he complained, "and talk as if I had been rehearsing it all and you wanted to know the name of the stage manager. When I asked Stockton how to go about it I told him you'd be flip-pant and not—" he paused, finishing wildly. "There, you led me into a trap!"

Camilla laughed again.

"So it was Stockton? He ought to have known better—with his experience."

"You were to be in a sympathetic mood, because of the opera, the music, the lights and the flowers—and all that, you know. He read about it in a book, and when the heroine was told that—well, what I told you—she let her beautiful head droop and a rose color crimsoned her fair white cheeks, while she softly said— Oh, I know it's a jolly bit of rot, Camilla, and I guess I've gone about it wrong; but, honestly, I care a lot for you, and it would please Pa. He thinks you've got such sense; couldn't you care for me a little?"

Camilla was again nodding to somebody.

"I do care for you, Ferdie; you are a good little boy, and some day some sweet, cute person, with none too much sense and no ambition, will make you a good wife. But you've made a mistake; don't let it happen again."

His expostulation was cut short by the appearance of another—a man who had been talking with Mrs. Trenton, and who now came into the foreground with a murmured apology and lightly took Camilla's outstretched hand.

"No intrusion, Mr. Illington," said Camilla, cheerfully. "Ferdie has just been wanting to marry me; it's his peculiar divertissement on opera nights, especially at 'Romeo and Juliet.' Why, in three seasons he has probably proposed to every available girl in the Horseshoe."

Young Mr. Acton rose to go, evincing, by furious blushes, his embarrassment that Camilla should so lightly regard and make public his advances. He made hurriedly for Mrs. Trenton, giving Illington a curt nod. Five minutes later Camilla saw him attentive to a young woman in a pale blue dress, and smiled across the forest of heads encouragingly, again to his discomfiture. Illington, who had taken the vacant seat, offered some commonplace on the singers of the night.

"I always preferred Eames in this," he confessed, frankly. "She is singing rather better this evening, too, than when I last heard her in Chicago."

"Chicago? Isn't that where they license opera as they do the circus and the Wild West—or is it Kansas City? I understood Chicago wasn't what is called 'musical.'"

"But it is—intensely. We have symphony cake-walk concerts in a vaudeville theatre twice daily, and once I heard a beautiful woman play the 'Intermezzo' on sleigh-bells."

"How extraordinary!"

"Yes; when you consider that she was poised on a slack wire at the time, and never once lost her balance."

He was looking gravely and steadily past Camilla.

"And is it true that in New York there are not enough fashion boxes to go around among all who can afford them, and that millionaires have actually been subjected to the alternative of sitting in the stalls?"

"I never thought of it. Why do you ask?"

"For no reason, but it seems such a pity. Down there they are actually forced to listen to the opera."

"And on the tiers?"

"Oh, they can go to sleep so comfortably after their busy day, except, of course, between the acts."

"I won't have you disrespectful of one of our cherished institutions, and one which, as you would say in Chicago, is so expensive."

"That's just it—you're so unfair about the expense. You merely publish a list of the stockholders, and fail entirely to satisfy public curiosity as to how much everybody in the house is worth. That is what the onlooker feels he is entitled to know. What we want is not a libretto of the opera, but an inventory of the wealth represented by every person in the audience, whether in the first tier or in the parquet."

"Naturally this practical idea prevails out West?"

"In Chicago one may learn anything, from the pedigree of the boxholders to the scandal attached to the old gentleman sitting near the orchestra, by merely asking the attendants."

"What an amiable system—and so comprehensive!"

Camilla had risen to assist Mrs. Trenton in greeting an incursion of callers who had "popped in, just for a second," and agreeably popped out again. She introduced Illington and there were some conventionalities; when they had gone he resumed his interested survey of the audience.

"I'm practically a newcomer, you know," he said, "and some of these people attract me immensely. For instance, the very tall young woman in Mrs. Washington Mayton's box; she can't be the little Katherine I used

to see with two long braids down her back, like the girl in the chocolate advertisement?"

"Yes, that's Katherine. She's getting along and grows frightfully one way. Pity she's so tall, isn't it? Ferdie calls her the Washington Monument."

"And the gorgeous feminine with them—I noticed she was excessively enthusiastic in approving the singers?"

"Mrs. Bond, the second—Frank Bond's new wife. It's her second opera season, and she's crude in some ways. The poor creature lived for years in a town out West where the musical events of the season were the appearances of the Bostonians and the Swiss Bell Ringers. Of the two, she preferred the Bostonians, and the result was that her musical education went entirely to seed."

"But the man who has just come in—that isn't Bond, as I recall him."

"Oh, dear, no. Bond never comes. He buys the box and allows the Maytons the privilege of making believe they're doing the honors. That is Willie Tremaine. His fad is growing rubber trees in his conservatory. The other day he had his picture taken while he posed between two of his largest trees, and Mrs. Escott made a joke about it at a dinner-party. You see, Willie is very short, and when Mrs. Escott was asked what she thought of the picture, she said it was probably accurate, but that it looked like a stretch of the imagination."

"What a poor joke!"

"Wasn't it? The poor thing was forced to explain it to everybody."

Here another brief visitation, after which Camilla found entertainment in the discussion of the first tier, *seriatim*, and declared that it was a pleasure to so enlighten the ignorant from the wilderness. Illington's gaze presently rested on a pale little woman not of the holy of holies, but whose parquet seat was apparently a rallying point for some clubmen he knew.

"Mrs. Newington!" he exclaimed. "What is she doing down there?"

Camilla uttered a gurgle of quiet surprise.

"How far behind you are, to be sure; don't you even read the papers in Chicago? It was quite terrible at the time. She ran away with two other women's husbands in one season—separately, of course—and has consequently been forgotten, except by the men. She's a regular feminine Mormon. It's a strange coincidence, but her given name is Charity."

"Why a coincidence?"

"Because Charity covers a multitude of sins."

Illington frowned.

"Poor Mrs. Newlington—or whatever her name is now—she wasn't a bad sort, as I remember her."

"No; but isn't it among those not of the bad sort that the unexpected usually happens? Have you a list of the New York divorces in the past five years?"

"Of course not."

"My dear man, how can you expect to go about? You'll be calling women by forbidden names and embarrassing a lot of them. Let me give you a bit of advice: Don't ask after any man's wife—you may mean somebody else."

"And who is Mrs. Newlington, now?"

"I don't know—yesterday her name was Brown."

A heavy lady, in pale yellow panne velvet, was rustling out of the compartment immediately in front.

"Dear Mrs. Perigold," commented Camilla. "She's always contriving to spoil the social season, either by just sailing for Europe or just coming home. She came over last week in a towering rage at some affront in London—the Gideon girl, who married an earl, refused to recognize her or something; and now Mrs. Perigold is devastating her New York visiting list by way of revenge. But whom are you with to-night?"

"Some men from the club—it was dull there, and we decided to come."

"Were the windows inaccessible?"

"What do you mean?"

"I thought that all men did at a club was to sit in the windows and

say smart things about the women that went by in carriages."

"Oh, there's only one club where they do that."

"What is the name of it?"

"I don't know; it's only to be read about in the society publications."

"You have clubs in Chicago?"

"Of course; they are maintained as an excuse for dress clothes and automobiles, just as you maintain the opera here for the same purposes."

"But what is the difference between New York and Chicago clubs?"

"Merely a figure of speech. In New York the club is an objective point where your driver may 'set you down.' In Chicago he also 'assists you to your room.'"

"Seriously, Mr. Illington, why have you come out of the wilderness? Have you made a lot of money? And are you taking supper at Mrs. Trenton's after the opera?"

"Because I'm weary of the wilderness alone; not a great deal—and yes—the last is the most important, because Mrs. Trenton tells me you will be there."

"Naturally, since I'm stopping with Mrs. Trenton while father is abroad. Why do you consider that important?"

"Because I'd like your views on the wilderness, and"—dropping his voice—"the hostess."

"Is it the custom to discuss the hostess where you come from?"

"Nothing, as a rule, pleases her more. Why did Mildred Porter marry Jack Trenton?"

"For any number of reasons, I suppose. And as for Brent, if that's what you mean, one cannot be expected to be always thinking of a tombstone. And I don't know that any woman of Mildred's sort is required to become a spinster through sheer sentiment. I don't fancy that it would be wise of you to recall any unpleasant obituary memories during a state of honeymoon. For it amounts to that, although they have been married five months—which is, no doubt, an eternally long time in Chicago."

Illington drew nearer.

"Then you haven't heard—anything?"

"What do you mean?"

"About Brent—that he isn't dead, and decidedly not buried. He's here; came yesterday, and is stopping with me. I saw him in Chicago some time ago, but he didn't want me to say anything until he came on."

Camilla gave an amazed glance about her and started to speak. They were interrupted, however, by two newcomers, who had dropped in on the Trentons', and, about to retire, stepped over to address Camilla. People were scurrying back to their places, and the conductor had his baton poised. Illington prepared to leave, but in the midst of the chatter Camilla managed to whisper:

"You must tell me about it; I shall be dying of curiosity until I know."

The red curtain was disappearing as Illington moved into his seat beside his friend Van Marsen. When the act concluded he was again thinking of invading the Trenton box, but, on looking up, saw that it was filled with callers, and that Camilla was herself well surrounded. Van Marsen noted his companion's interest, and mentally took stock of it, since he had heard certain reports about Illington and the secret of his return to New York.

"Wonderful how Camilla Traver-ton has restrained herself from marrying," he observed, sagely.

Illington looked away with assumed indifference.

"Is it a matter for restraint?"

"Decidedly. And think of the traps set for her! Do you know, I fancy her as a spinster—a thoroughly modern one, of course—to lead people, and give matrimonial advice to others, and all that."

"I do not think Camilla will ever be a spinster," declared Illington, with conviction.

"Then it will be unfortunate. Society needs spinsters. It can turn to them in moments of domestic infelicity and sigh over them as good examples. There are enough bad examples."

Illington followed him listlessly.

"You don't think much of society?"

"On the contrary, I think too much of it. But it is too active, and one's training must necessarily be so severe. Take my retrospect for to-day, if you will: Half an hour after I was stirring I found myself at one of Mrs. Blarg-ing's musical mornings. Chops and Chopin! Do you wonder at my chronic dyspepsia? At one, a little luncheon with Neddie Stockton, and at two, off to some terrible contrivance at Mrs. Knott's. A dinner at seven, and to-night, here. Afterward, I'm with a little party downtown, and they'll discuss opera. It seems to me that the worst thing about the opera is that it is like Mrs. Briefly's new gown up there—or is it a gown?—it causes so much talk."

He took a random inventory of the circle.

"Have you been out much?"

"Very little," responded Illington.

"Then you haven't seen Sophia Lee take off her stockings?"

Illington was bewildered.

"Bless me, no! But I suppose she *must* take them off some of the time."

"All of the time, if she had her way. It's a diversion she created. Mrs. Rashley wanted something entirely new in the entertaining line—something, she said, everybody didn't do. So she asked Sophia about it, and—well, she got it. Her invitations read: 'To meet Miss Sophia Lee, who will take off her stockings.' You may guess that none of the men had any other engagements, and as for the women—they simply had to be there to see how far the scandalous thing went. Well, there was a dinner, quite as proper as any dinner ever is, and some dancing, which was vastly more proper. At ten o'clock the event of the evening was announced, and Mrs. Rashley took them all into her largest room, carrying with her the most beautiful—and the longest—pair of stockings ever seen in public in society. And Sophia went boldly behind a screen on a small platform while the horrified audience gathered around and held its breath. The sus-

pense was too much for old Mrs. Bouden, who had hysteria, and had to be carried out before the affair could proceed. Mrs. Rashley handed the articles over the top of the screen, and presently asked Sophia if they were on. She answered by removing the screen. I say, are you easily shocked?"

"No," replied Illington, hesitatingly; "I think you may go on, safely."

"I'm glad of that. I don't like to shock people. Well, when the screen was taken away, Sophia stood beside a dummy from a hosiery counter. The stockings were on the dummy—no doubt they were *hers*—and she demurely proceeded to remove them. But it was awfully disappointing. The entertainment was voted a failure."

Illington laughed.

"At least, Sophia was clever."

"None of the men will tell you so—now."

"And is it so hard for the hostesses to find some incentive for the men, nowadays?"

"It is getting desperate. Why, the only way Mrs. Parkerton can get the fellows going her way is by promising to mix the cocktails personally. I don't know why that is, either. I went once and drank two of the cocktails, and now I find I've always somewhere else to go when Mrs. Parkerton is entertaining. I suppose it's merely one's personal opinion of what a cocktail should be, and tastes differ. How hard it is to please! Mrs. Everton, who runs to vaudeville, and has been looking for something perfectly horrifying, got a little Frenchwoman, who has been singing untranslatable songs at the music halls, and everybody gathered prepared to be offended. What do you suppose the creature did?"

"After the stocking dénouement I wouldn't care to guess."

"Sang 'The Holy City.'"

"Too bad!"

"Yes; but the interesting part of it is that she sang it in French, which Mrs. Everton didn't understand, and

she's been priding herself on giving the most sensational affair of the season, while almost everybody else remembers it as something in the line of a church social."

Here the orchestra interfered with Van Marsen's chatter, and Illington, with a regretful look up at Camilla, settled back into a doubtful appreciation of the stage proceedings.

II

THE supper-party at Mrs. Trenton's brought Camilla and Illington together as neighbors, possibly through the contrivance of Camilla herself. But the results in exchanges of confidence were not at first satisfactory, since, on one side, Illington found the necessity of polite attention to Mrs. Aarons, while Camilla was burdened with Neddie Stockton. The latter, who had been sympathetically regarding Ferdie and the girl in blue across the table, was promptly taken to task by Camilla for his part in the evening's love-farce.

"How dared you tell Ferdie to do such a thing?" she asked.

"My aim is to strengthen the weak," he declared, solemnly. "I insist that I would now be offering my congratulations instead of receiving your abuse had Ferdie carefully followed my instructions. He must have missed some of his lines."

"He proposed to my shoulder-blades, if that is what you mean. It wasn't a bit pretty, Neddie, and made him appear awfully silly. For, supposing he had been sincere, and my refusal had broken his heart, do you think he could have been induced to come here and lavish his attention on the Aarons girl, as he is doing now? When he gets to the serious point with her, coach him a little more sensibly than you did in my case, and in any event, don't select the grand opera and the Metropolitan Opera House. It's so public. What must be your ideas of the proprieties, anyway?"

"Marriage and giving in marriage. I refuse to catalogue them among the

improprieties. I hold the record at St. Thomas's as best man, and I don't propose to disregard it so long as I have my life and strength and God-given diplomacy as a marriage instructor to the young. I see, as in a vision, the day when I shall stand at the holy of holies in the case of Camilla Traverton, even if I'm there in purely a secondary capacity."

"Really, Ned, I don't think you fitted to conduct a matrimonial bureau. Even the right man might make a bad impression under your tutelage. I suggest as a more profitable occupation that you engage in reuniting some of the unfortunates already married, instead of trying to add to the lists of the mismatched. I cannot understand why you interfere."

"My dear Camilla, everybody has a fad. Mine is nothing more serious than assisting others to commit marriage. It gives me a personal satisfaction and offers people something to talk about. Indeed, it is of inestimable benefit, furnishing, as it does, business for the milliner, the modiste, the caterer, the tailor and the clergy. That, after awhile, it also gives employment to the lawyer is no concern of mine. My duty ends at the altar. In my life, Camilla Traverton, I have heard the fashionable wedding march played just twenty-three times, and, please God, I shall hear it twenty-three times more."

"Or until it is played at your own wedding, after which you will think it is the Dead March from 'Saul.' I don't like your fad; it's about the same as old Mrs. Langdon's, which is to visit funerals. Both of you seem to enjoy misery."

"Camilla, I never talk with you that you don't distract me. For the last time I will ask you, Why don't you get married? You lie as heavily on my conscience as a mince pie on a small boy's digestion."

She looked at him defiantly as she answered:

"I will say, without mincing, that if you are going to keep this up every time we are thrown together, Ned, I shall ask Mrs. Trenton to cut you off

her visiting list, without a shilling." She laughed, in very buoyancy of spirits, and added:

"Aren't you glad that Tom Illington is home from Chicago?"

"I am always glad when anybody is home from Chicago. But seriously, Camilla——"

"If you are going to talk seriously, pay some attention to Mrs. Escott, whom you haven't even looked at."

She turned to Illington, who was extricating himself from a discussion of Gounod with Mrs. Aarons, a lady who declared that she had "studied" the composers, believed that the opera was losing its educational advantages, and that art was not necessarily immoral. This somewhat purposeless person fluttered lightly from one topic to another with perfect ease, but, sensibly enough, escaped deep water. Illington was relieved when Trenton, who was opposite, drew her attention by some trifling remark.

"Don't have anything to do with Neddie Stockton," began Camilla, emphatically.

"But how can I help it? He has a neighboring bachelor apartment and carries the best stock of Scotch in New York, even if he does use mine mostly. Besides, he can mix a toddy so well that it's a shame he isn't made to favor the public with his specialty for at least three hours every day. Only his respectability prevents him from being a bartender."

"He will try to marry you off before you've been here another week."

Illington smiled.

"Very well; that wouldn't be a bad idea, assuming, of course, he marries me to the right person."

"But that is just what he won't do. He'll pick you up a divorcee or a widow, and have you in church before you know her name—perhaps while you're under the influence of his toddy. Promise me you won't drink too much of it?"

"I don't know just what quantity would be required to fit one for matrimony, but, under some circumstances, I believe I could arrive at

the important point without any whatever, attractive as it is."

Camilla became a trifle frightened, for Illington was looking at her in a way that suggested the important point to be dangerously near. She recovered quickly, and was about to return some irrelevant remark, when she suddenly observed: "How unfortunate!" and pressed her lips closely. This was not addressed to Illington, but rather hopelessly to herself, and was the outcome of a question that came bomb-like from the other side of the table, and that suddenly hushed all the small chatter, with the result of one of those embarrassing moments dreaded by all diners-out. From the mere fitness of the unexpected it came from Ferdinand Acton:

"Did you know that El Brent was back, and alive and well?"

This interrogation, which might have been intended for the Aarons girl, hit any and everywhere. Its effect was remarkable and disconcerting. In the suddenly ensuing calm Mildred Trenton was cognizant of being the centre of attention, although her eyes were cast down and her bit of salad seemed the most important thing in the world. The thought-motive that prompted the glances in her direction was understood alike by all—save, possibly, Ferdie himself—and that these glances were almost as quickly directed elsewhere did not save the situation. After all, it was a matter of natural instinct, for the cause had been sudden and unpremeditated. The rudeness of it was born of the shock. There was no denying that everybody there—and everybody in New York, for that matter—knew of Mildred Trenton's former attachment for Elbridge Brent, and the innocent questioning of Ferdie brought up a still vivid memory and a startling recurrence to an old problem that had puzzled Mildred's acquaintances. Trenton was himself visibly put out, and yet it was he who undertook to restore the party to its balance by the most natural of observations under the circumstances:

"Impossible! Wasn't he reported to have been killed out West?"

Ferdie, half-conscious of a mistake somewhere, nevertheless babbled on:

"That's the odd part of it; everybody thought so. You know there were columns and columns in the papers about it at the time he went on the expedition down the Colorado River. Well, when the boat upturned and the men were drowned, and they found what was supposed to be him, and sent it on here in such shape that nobody knew whether El was himself or an Indian——"

Camilla glanced swiftly at Mildred, noted the pallor of her cheeks, and came mercifully into the breach.

"For goodness's sake, Ferdie, there's no necessity for recalling all that. Your tone is as doleful as the morgue, and everybody knows about it." She turned to her companion on the right. "But it's true Mr. Brent is home, isn't it, Mr. Illington?" Then, with explanatory brevity: "Mr. Illington met him in Chicago."

She had, at least partially, restored the gathering to its normal mind, for Mrs. Aarons was finishing her salad and Mrs. Escott made a Biblical quotation.

There was nothing more apparent than polite inquiry in Mrs. Trenton's tones as she addressed Illington:

"It is a strange bit of news, though. Tell us more about it, Mr. Illington; and why didn't you bring Mr. Brent with you? He is an old friend, and I should be glad to have him here."

"It's rather early for a man with an obituary record to break into society, I am afraid," he returned, lightly, and inwardly cursing the moon-faced Ferdie. "And I don't think there is very much to tell. El wasn't drowned, although the rest of the poor fellows with him were. That was a year ago, you know. Since the accident he's been down in Arizona, ranching and roughing it. He didn't learn he was dead until two months ago, and came on to Chicago to ask me for particulars. Then I came here, and he followed yesterday. How

he got out of the cañon alive, and of his wandering and illness, he will have to tell you some day himself. It's a pretty state of affairs for the lawyers, though. You see, El's brother Henry came into his fortune, and I fancy there'll be the liveliest sort of a row over it, since Henry is—well, not generous."

"Just like a play," declared Mrs. Escott. "Or like the man what's-his-name wrote a beautiful long poem about." Turning to Stockton: "Longfellow, you know—or perhaps it was Bryant; at least, none of these new ones. Only the poet's hero was a sailor, and married, and when he returned his wife had married somebody else. Very pathetic, and said to be true. Fortunately, Mr. Brent, being a bachelor—is he still a bachelor, Mr. Illington? Perhaps he has chosen one of those Indian women, as I've heard they do out West?"

"I'm uncertain on that point, but as El was wrecked in Utah, recovered in Colorado, and went to live in Arizona, it may be he's a Mormon."

"In which case," interposed Stockton, "his place is not in New York, but Washington. But it's extraordinary, Illington, and at least you might have told a neighbor about it."

"My dear fellow, I haven't seen you until to-night for forty-eight hours, and the end of the world is possible within that length of time."

"But you wouldn't hurry about telling me even that. When I have anything important to communicate I look people up."

"Well, look in on me to-morrow night and I'll show you Brent. This is a strictly private view, understand. He won't be on public exhibition right away. Poor El, I'm afraid he's going to be the most pointed out man in New York until the next sensation appears."

"And I will go, too, if I may," chirped the persistent Ferdie.

Illington looked at him coldly.

"I'm afraid not, Ferdie. There are some things Brent cannot yet undergo."

At this point Mr. Aarons began the

anecdote of the whale, which was recognized as the culminating point of any social diversion. He had a listless lot of listeners, and Mrs. Aarons, detecting this, cast a commiserating look at Mildred and expressed polite curiosity on the passing of time.

"It isn't very late," declared the Aarons girl, "and besides, mamma, the auty isn't likely to catch cold."

"Don't be frivolous, my dear. She means the automobile," added her mother, apologetically. "Really, Mrs. Trenton, Mirabel is becoming a trial. I think I shall have to take her home—she's incorrigible after one."

Mr. Aarons was finishing the incident of the whale with only Ferdie for a listener, and Ferdie was looking at Mirabel. In the quiet confusion of the breaking up of the party Mrs. Trenton approached Illington.

"You must ask Mr. Brent to call; ask him for me, if you will."

"I am sure he intended to see you," he returned. "He was speaking of you only to-day."

She was pressing her hands together somewhat nervously.

"It is so—so odd; Ferdie gave me quite a shock. I can't quite understand it, you see. Everybody was so sure at the time, and the circumstances were such—well, I really cannot grasp it to-night."

She turned away to bid some of the departing guests good-night, and Illington found Camilla in her place.

"Wasn't it horrible?" she questioned. "I—I didn't want Mildred to hear about it in quite that way; of course, she had to hear, but I had hoped it wouldn't come as it did. One never knows what to expect of Ferdie Acton. Couldn't you have spoken about it to Mildred when you visited the box? Oh, dear! Sometimes I think you men are so deadly dense."

Illington sighed.

"You are perfectly right, Camilla. When I called in the box I intended speaking, but we were interrupted, and the opportunity didn't come again."

"And I'm to blame, too—why on earth I didn't rattle it off in the carriage I don't know; it would have been the least severe way. You'll bring him around, of course; it's the natural thing, I suppose."

"Yes," replied Illington, "if he'll come. Of that I'm not so sure. He speaks very bitterly of Mildred, and yet I think he wants to see her. If he didn't, he wouldn't have come back. There is something I don't know, Camilla—something back of it all that he hasn't told me yet, and he's very greatly changed. Had he ever quarreled with Mildred before he went away?"

"I don't think so—that's the strange part of it, a part of it I never understood. She waited for him for two years, and a little while afterward came the news of the accident. She seemed heartbroken, and you know her marriage to Jack was nothing more than a commonplace affair on her part, although he fairly worships her. I suppose she felt that she must marry somebody—most girls do, whatever their interests of the heart—and she found that Jack would do rather better than anybody else, since he had always admired her. But she has never quite forgotten El, and until she and Jack came back from the South on their honeymoon she didn't go about any more than was necessary. Oh, it's all so absurd and impossible. Why do things happen this way?"

Stockton cut short their colloquy, and Mrs. Escott was among the last of the guests to go bustling to the door. Illington walked over to bid Mr. and Mrs. Trenton good-night, and his last impression, as the cab moved away, was of Mildred's figure in the soft light of the receiving hall—a figure that all at once appealed to him as pitifully helpless and forlorn.

What he did not see was that she stood thus, silent and quite white, for some minutes, and then returned languidly to the drawing-room. Jack Trenton and Camilla were there looking at one another in mute and bewildered distress. Mildred glanced

at them as she entered. Her husband started toward her with outstretched arms, but she gave a little shrinking gesture and stepped back.

"You might have told me of this, Camilla," she said, but there was no note of chiding in her tones, which were even and spiritless. "You knew?"

Camilla rushed over to her and impulsively pressed her in her arms.

"Yes, Milly, dear; but only an hour before. It *was* silly of me. I don't know why I didn't speak. Come, you are very tired, and Ferdie Acton has made a pretty mess; we'll go up to bed."

Camilla led her like a little child. As they reached the doorway Trenton called out:

"Mildred—don't go; I've got something to tell you."

She smiled back at him rather wearily.

"Not to-night, Jack—no, no, please, not to-night. I am so put out. Wait until morning."

III

WHEN Illington awoke the next morning it was to the consciousness of slamming doors and the consequent conclusion that Stockton had called. It was Stockton's manner of making his presence known in "The Quarters," for he had frequently declared that the pervading calm depressed him. Illington recognized his voice in the outer and main apartment of his suite, which he used as a sort of bachelor snugery, and combined receiving-room, parlor and what Ferdie Acton dubbed the bar. Stockton had evidently come upon Brent, to whom he was explaining that he would have called immediately after the supper at Mrs. Trenton's but for Illington's absurd conventionality. After this the conversation was desultory, and Stockton achieved a witticism in hoping that now Brent was home he would endeavor to live up to his obituary record. Then he went away to an

accompaniment of more slamming doors.

Illington rang for his servant, who prepared his bath and brought the morning papers. These he seized eagerly and found in them the expected. There was a conspicuous similarity in the various tales of the mysteriously returned wanderer and the gruesome speculations concerning the mistake in the identification of the dead man who slept under the name of the living. Only one, however, contained any intimation of the old love affair, and that so indirectly that Illington gave a sigh of relief and found his tub enjoyable. He had feared that there would be something to add publicity to Mildred's grief and annoy his friend.

When he entered the den he found Brent standing before the fireplace. He greeted him, glanced outside and discovered the consoling evidence of a light snowstorm, and went over to the table with its white cloth and neatly prepared breakfast.

"Had your coffee, El?" he asked, as he sat down and carefully folded a newspaper so that it had the support of the sugar bowl.

"Yes, thank you; Denners brought me something."

Brent turned a chair about, in order to face his companion, and sat looking at him rather curiously. The returned adventurer was possibly thirty years of age, and there was about him the strong evidence of healthy youth and a trimness that did not suggest even a temporary rough life. His face was clean cut and pleasant, yet determined; at the temples his brown hair showed little premature threads of gray. His appearance was that of a man who had fought and conquered, but who had known the pain of sacrifice. He smiled faintly at Illington and asked:

"Is that Chicago style?"

Illington looked quizzically over the top of the *Herald*.

"What?"

"Consuming the news with your rolls?"

"Yes; one of the commonest accomplishments we have. Out West,

one learns to rush and to combine as many practical necessities as possible. It's important to business. Of course it prevails in Arizona?"

"Not on the ranch; we go in for excitement, but do not mix it with our meals. And the prints are too outrageously exciting."

"They aid digestion. Newspaper excitement is rational enough; it's consoling to know that all you read is true, and I never doubt any statement. I think you'll agree with me that there's a singular unanimity of opinion in New York that truth is stranger than fiction—to-day, at least. I've found that good old passage in every paper I've seen, and it's all about you, too."

Brent crushed an innocent daily under one foot.

"Yes," he admitted, "I have been reading them."

"You ought to look more after the commercial results. The stage, for example, in a dramatization of your wild western career, offers you a fine field. Why, you've got a fortune in all this advertising. Now, Stockton might help you out, and his friend, Van Marse, who dabbles in the theatre; he could do the comedy to relieve the melodrama."

Brent got up quickly and walked over to the window.

"I don't feel much like comedy." He returned suddenly to ask: "Do you think I made a mistake in coming back here?"

"No; it was quite natural. You are dead and buried; you hear this interesting news and decide to come on and find out if your loving brother Henry has given you the attention a respectable deceased would properly demand; and you want to be absolutely sure there is no will contest. It is so much better to do these things personally."

Brent ejaculated his impatience.

"Bother the money! I wasn't thinking about that. I've seen Henry, and that is all right, and I wouldn't worry if it wasn't. Do you suppose I'd come back and cause all this talk over a trifle like that?"

"I'd suppose that any man would drift out of a desert into civilization, if that's what you mean."

"There are worse deserts in New York than in Arizona," proclaimed the other, with some feeling. "Anyway, I never felt lonely there."

"Lonely? Why, you morbid alkali curiosity, you can't go out in the street this minute without finding that half New York wants to shake hands with you."

Brent, with his hands clasped and head bowed, looked moodily at the dancing blue flames.

"I couldn't go into the most crowded place in New York without that feeling of desolation becoming keener every minute. I tell you there's more misery for a lonely man in a crowd than when he's forty miles from nowhere. It's grown upon me, and I can't shake it off. I can't stand happiness around me any longer."

Illington was perplexed.

"And is that the trouble—happiness? You ought to feel it in the air. Why shouldn't you? You have all the simple rudiments that bring happiness—youth, strength, your life not half lived—and the world is open to you. You're a sensible fellow, or ought to be; you can go back to your old friends, your old haunts and your old ways—"

"My old ways!" Brent laughed stridently. "Don't you know," he asked, incredulously, "why I left New York?"

"I don't mean the extreme of it; you took your vices too elaborately—exhausted them. I know, El, that you were what was called a good fellow, and I know that that isn't the most flattering thing in the world to call anybody. Wildness isn't happiness. I've had enough experience to know. I'm not talking about another oat crop."

Brent was apparently under the stress of some deep excitement, but for a time he remained silent, only to break out with what Illington both feared and welcomed.

"Well, what did Mildred Trenton say?"

Illington rang for Denners to remove the dishes, and did not reply until the servant was gone, when he lighted a cigarette.

"The news surprised her. It came at an unfortunate time. There was a distressing blunder made, and I think the shock was hurtful. For the rest, she was eager—intensely so—to hear about you. And you are to call there with me."

He stopped and looked straight into the eyes of the man before him, and finished deliberately:

"And in this connection I think it would be rather better for you to tell me outright, and now, just what you consider it my business to know of you and Mildred Trenton. I don't want to make any more mistakes."

Brent moved uneasily.

"You are entitled to know, if anyone is. I had intended to tell you, but it's the sort of thing a fellow likes to put off. I must tell somebody, it seems to me, just for the relief of it. But I haven't been a very confidential person for some time now."

He seemed loath to begin, and toyed with a cigar he had taken from his case. Finally he lighted it, and this incidental employment appeared to assist him.

"You know what I was five years ago, just before you went to Chicago. No, you needn't be charitable enough to call it wild oats. I was twenty-seven then, and a man is usually through with that sort of thing at that age, particularly when he's been brought up as I was. I got as drunk at sixteen as I could ever hope to get at twenty-six. That doesn't sound nice, but it's so palpably the situation. I went the way of most 'good fellows' with money back of them, and, unfortunately, as the old humorist has it, the trouble wasn't in getting started that way, but in staying there when I arrived. It seems odd, these days, when there is science enough in the world to cure us of even our vices, to say that I was going straight to the devil from mere dissipation. I was going there when I first met Mildred. We liked each

other at once, and finally it got to be something more sacred than that. You'd think it would have pulled me up—it would most men. I thought so myself for a time, but when we became engaged I found that most people pitied Mildred. Even the love of a good woman couldn't save me, although, God knows, she did all she could. It came to me that I must make a final fight, away from all that was familiar and enticing. Yes, I was as weak as that. And I went to Mildred, fairly and honestly, and told her so. At that time this seemed the only way. We discussed it for weeks before she, in what appeared to be her blind and overpowering love for me, came to my conclusion. And when she did so it was with one alternative: to prove her faith in me she urged our marriage."

Illington half-rose from his chair. He was very pale, and clutched spasmodically at the covering on the table.

"Brent!" he cried.

The man smiled.

"No, it didn't get that far; I am no Enoch Arden. And now you may judge of the extent of my depravity. The night she told me that, my madness got the mastery of me and culminated in a more horrible abandonment than ever before. Can you comprehend it—I can't now—that the greatest gift a man can have in this life is nothing beside the wildness of his animal desires? The remorse of it drove me away without ever seeing her again. I had a vague sense of traveling about on railway trains and continuing my debauch geographically. I came to my senses in a city out West, and when I did so I wrote her a mad and incoherent letter—a queer jumble of phrases, I imagine, but it was sincere. I asked for her faith, her tears, her prayers and her silence, in the year I had now firmly planned to make my fight. Above all, I implored her not to seek me, but told her that twelve months from that day I would inform her whether I had conquered or not, when we might judge of the future."

Brent stopped, puffed at the cigar, and then threw it into the grate.

"I am offering no excuse for my extraordinary actions nor the absurd melodrama of them. To-day I couldn't tell you why I took that course. I know I was physically and mentally shattered from my unnatural life, and I suppose I grasped at extremes to change it. My new career started in Wyoming, up in the hills country, away from anywhere and almost everybody. At first I found it rough and hard and unyielding; then, all at once and for the first time in my life, I began to understand and appreciate the simple delight of breathing and being, and to comprehend the beauty of a morning and the peace of evening. And for the first time I met a man—a man who was uncouth and strange and strong and honest. He had been the world's kicking-stone all his life, and yet at forty was as simple as a child; a purposeless man, if you will, and one that had never arrived anywhere, for his ambitions were vague and comprehended only the enjoyment of the sunlight and a free life. We rode after the cattle by day and sometimes slept under the stars by night—stars that after a while seemed to sing down to us and to make of us dreamers in comradeship. And we were never lonely.

"Oh, it was a strange, eventful, impossible time, that time when the first peace I had ever known came to me! When the Winter approached we trudged together out of the cattle country and into the mining camps of Colorado, following the chain beyond the Great Divide, and drinking in the changing moods of nature as we encountered them in highways and byways. I think I was absolutely and boyishly happy in this romance of a deferred childhood. He was a master of all the peculiar arts of the West, and when the snow bound us within the mountains, near a rough little mining camp in the San Miguel, he taught me the rudiments of the miner, and we worked together underground and found rough-and-ready friends at

the miners' boarding-house—friends that were boisterous and crude, but that it did one good to know. And my day's wage was more to me than all the money piled up in Henry's bank.

"The Spring found us wanderers again, this time in New Mexico, and as July drew near we hurried into Arizona. I can never adequately explain my sensations at this time. I felt that a great load had gone from me and that I had won something—possibly my self-respect. And I was confident—of myself and of my ability to walk in the world as a man of purpose and to come back home without fear of the old shadows. Although I had never confided my secret to Emmons, I dreamed of what awaited me, and even planned minutely some details for the future. It was at this time that I wrote to Mildred, telling her of our destination and relating the new life I had found and my hope for the future; nor in my enthusiasm did I hesitate to say that I believed I had earned my right to claim her. One year, to a day, from the time I had entered on my new existence we arrived at the scattered group of *adobe* huts that lay around the post office and general store of the little town of Mendabes. And I swear to you that, ugly and squat as this dusty, odd place was, it seemed to be the most beautiful spot under the sun and the end of a path that led to paradise."

Brent's face grew hard, in strange contrast to the light it had held as he told of his adventures. He mused so long that Illington finally spoke:

"And her letter?"

"Was there; I had, in some wild hope of the saving grace of my rehabilitation, rather expected Mildred herself. I had pictured her coming into the wilderness to meet me—so strong was my newly found faith in the world, born of pure air and sacrifice and hardiness.

"But here ends my story. It wasn't much of a letter—such as women write, I suppose, who've had a chance to collect themselves after the original excitement of what they call love.

She thanked me for my generosity in going away and allowing her to realize her 'mistake.' And I gathered that there were social ambitions and all that, and that somebody had come into her life.

"My first impulse was to return to New York. But there was a certain sort of compensation held out in the resumption of our spasmodic life, and we tramped carelessly on, down into Mexico and back north again, and then—then came that Colorado River expedition, of which you know. God knows how I came out of it—Emmons went down and the six other brave fellows. I remember clinging, half-naked, to a rock in the cold current; then days and days of wandering, with my only companion a half-breed Indian who came across me somewhere. After a time I got back to Mendabes and was ill on a ranch there. Then I got the papers, and learned of the horrible mistake made. Before the expedition started, I had, for the first time in my journeying, notified my brother of my whereabouts and of my intention to return after we had made the passage of the river, and so the search for us came about. It was a mad and unnecessary adventure, but one of the mysteries men are always seeking to solve in the West."

Brent rose, smiling in rather ghastly fashion.

"I suppose any old derelict that was battered up in the Colorado River would have done for me, but I find myself wondering just whom they selected."

Illington went over to the side of his friend and, carelessly placing one hand on Brent's shoulder, gave it a reassuring pressure.

"It's an odd story, El, and not without its excitement—I'm awfully glad you told me the whole of it. But let me give you a little advice. Don't let it make you the pessimist you threaten to be, and don't think that the light of your life has gone out just because you've been buffeted a little more dramatically than the rest of us. There isn't a woman in the world that is really worth everlasting sackcloth

and ashes—no, I don't think there's one. Still——"

Illington glanced curiously at Brent.

"Well?"

"Somehow I didn't think Mildred was quite that sort."

He walked over and rang for Den-ners.

"You're going to call, of course?"

"I suppose," he began, dubiously; "yes, I am. I must; but not right away."

Illington gave some orders to his servant.

"It's a beastly bad day, Brent," he said, "and one of the days when a suggestion isn't to be sneezed at. Why not let me put you down at the club? You've got to meet them all eventually, you know, and there's little in putting it off. To-night I'm going to bring half a dozen fellows around here."

Brent was irresolute.

"Very well," he decided, finally.

"As you say, I must get it over."

Something Illington had said seemed to strike home, and he pondered silently for several minutes. As they were leaving, he asked, suddenly:

"What did you mean by saying that you didn't think Mildred was quite that sort?"

"Oh, a mere figure of speech, I suppose. Of course, we can't explain motives, always, but it seems to me that Mildred's letter to you may have been written under some great stress. Do you know what I would have done, had I received such a letter under those circumstances?"

"Well?"

"No train would have been fast enough to bring me back to New York."

Brent smiled cynically.

"I don't believe you'd know when you were jilted."

"I know I wouldn't believe it by mail," replied the other, shortly.

IV

At the club that Illington principally affected, he found in his mail a

number of invitations, one of which interested him. It was a line from Mrs. Escott to the effect that she was giving a children's party that afternoon, and that Camilla and some of the younger set were helping her out. It had occurred to her that morning that possibly he would like to drop in a minute and see the little dears, bringing, if possible, the mysterious Mr. Brent. Illington showed the note to his friend.

"Mrs. Escott wants to show you off to the coming generation, you see—possibly as a horrible example of what comes of going West. I think I'll look in, but honestly, I couldn't ask you to undergo that."

A statement with which Brent precipitately agreed. Illington left him to greet some wondering former familiars, and in no very contented frame of mind. Then he drove about town on some business errands, lunching with a Chicago acquaintance, and getting back to his apartments barely in time to dress for the afternoon.

Mrs. Escott greeted him with excessive extravagance and to the accompaniment of a crash in crockery.

"One of the sweet little things is breaking the china," she exclaimed, with apologetic pride, together with a "so sorry" aside to Illington's regrets for Brent. "This is the birthday anniversary of Penelope, my daughter's youngest. I always insist on doing the honors. So good of you to come."

She led the way into the drawing-room, and, to Illington's immediate dismay, he found a series of large, connecting apartments filled with a multitude of children. The chatter was little short of deafening, for he had arrived at a time when the stiffness of conventionality had worn off from the infantile disposition, and was succeeded by unrepressed exuberance and delirious excitement. He became the immediate centre of attention. A young gentleman of seven had fallen in behind him, as he proceeded through the rooms, and was giving an interesting imitation of his stride. Becoming conscious of this, he turned

and caught the offender, and at once ingratiated himself into the good-will of the youngsters by demanding several bonbons as ransom for the prisoner. The sweets were forthcoming and promptly bestowed on a tot in a blue dress. Next he ran into an ambuscade of pretty little girls in quaint frocks who made a ring and surrounded him, until, to gain his freedom, he was compelled to kiss each in turn. This agreeable penalty was performed to the amazed envy of a number of young gallants.

The rooms were picturesque in color and decoration, and flitting about were brightly costumed young women, some of whom he dimly recalled as having themselves been little girls when he left New York five years before. Mrs. Escott presented a number of these, all of whom were bewilderingly spirited away by young enthusiasts before he was given half an opportunity to talk about anything. Then he found himself in a little corner set apart with palms and rubber trees, where was a cushioned throne on which reposed a young lady with a very large book indeed. The throne was overrun with small humanity manifesting a desire to "see the pictures," while more small humanity reposed flatly on the floor, drinking in the marvelous adventures of a giant, as related by the presiding priestess. The priestess was Camilla. He stood by, watching the interesting group, until Camilla finished and gave up the cherished volume to be carried elsewhere. The appearance of a courier, seeking volunteers for a dance, put nearly all the admirers of the fairy-lady to flight, and Illington promptly took a vacant chair near-by.

"I thought I would find you doing something like this," he declared; "or feeding them ices until their temperatures cooled."

"I've romped with them until they've tired me out. However did you get through that crush and live to tell it?"

"By spanking all the boys and kissing all the girls. Isn't it wonder-

ful how early they become accustomed to that?"

"The spanking?"

"Yes—but particularly the kissing. I'm somewhat at sea with fashionable children. Among the waifs the thing is easier—one has merely to keep stuffing them with edibles. I remember a newsboys' dinner, and I swear to you that the capacity developed approached a miracle."

"You ought to see little Gregory Clarke eating chocolates; he would be a boy after your own heart. This afternoon he approached me in entire confidence and asked if I thought Mrs. Escott had made arrangements quite sufficient in this important matter. At the time his pockets were stuffed, and he was holding his kisses at two chocolates each—rather a good business plan, since Gregory is popular with the misses. But how does it come about that you dropped in here? Men usually avoid this sort of thing."

Illington endeavored to appear unconscious of his real reason.

"Mrs. Escott sent me a line at the club this morning and I had nothing important in view. It doesn't bore me; I like to watch the children; they are usually so unaffected and sincere. And these young women who are helping Mrs. Escott out of her lively scrape—why, I believe I've had them all on my knee at one time or another. I refer to the past, of course; astonishing how they accomplish long gowns so soon."

Camilla smiled slyly.

"Perhaps it would be as well not to remind them of it—the knee part, I mean. Most of these girls have suitors now. How queerly you talk about the past! You've been out of society only five years, and one would think it a century, from the reminiscent way you go on. You make me feel old, for I was something more than a bud when you went away, remember."

Illington cast about for something even more personal than a woman's age; he recognized that it wouldn't very well do to remind Camilla that

she was old enough to marry. No woman cares to have it put quite in that way. Camilla, he considered, had an extraordinary and irritating method of leading one up to a subject and then irrationally diverting it at the most opportune point. The orchestra was playing a minuet, and the children were moving to the stately measure with odd attempts at gravity and patience, foreign to their natural tendency to romp. Those not dancing were grouped about, and Illington surveyed an interesting and familiar picture of childhood. Here a diminutive Lothario had stolen into a corner with the daintiest of maidens and rapturously watched her as she devoured his sweets. A bashful little boy had one thumb in his mouth and was blushing resisting the advances of a pink-and-white angel who had descended upon him. A wonderful spinning top that sang and hummed, even above the music of the orchestra, had the undivided attention of puzzled young scientists near the open grate, while all over the room Mrs. Escott's corps of willing entertainers rescued the guests from all manner of youthful perils.

"And to think," sighed Camilla, who had also been following this scene, "that some day, very soon, too, they'll all be grown up and flitting about the world in a fashionable quest for happiness, teaching themselves to be cold and heartless and artificial, making agreeable marriages and getting very morose and dull over it all. These pretty little tots, with their neat frocks, are just beginning to find out the value of a ribbon and the superiority that comes from wearing a jewel. After a while these things will become the most important facts in the world to them, just as a man's dinner becomes the most important to him."

"You contemplate, then, that even Gregg Clarke will tire of his chocolates?"

"Surely. In twenty years he'll be cursing the chef because the bird is badly roasted—or at what age do men usually begin to curse the chef?"

"After forty, if they remain unmarried. Never, otherwise."

"So a man even takes his appetite into the matrimonial market! I suspected as much. Instead of the chef, I suppose the wife gets the blame. Here we have the secret of your selfishness; trust a man to make his other half responsible for his ill-nature!"

She dismissed the subject in an imperious way, just when he had a reply ready.

"You are going out a deal, then? How much time have you given yourself for this fashionable dissipation in order to grind off the edges of business?"

"Three months; then I intend to go abroad." A wild consciousness that here was another opportunity came to him. "That is, if I can make arrangements."

"Are the arrangements so very difficult?"

"In one respect—the chief respect; I find it hard to arrive at the preliminaries. Camilla—"

She gave him a quick, comprehensive and nervous glance, identical with the one he had encountered the night before. Then she called out, with more haste than would seem necessary, to one of Mrs. Escott's assisting hostesses who was passing:

"Fanny, my dear!" The girl came over, and she presented her companion.

"Mr. Illington is the only man present," she explained, "and I think it will be a shame if he is not treated with some honor. Mrs. Escott has quite forgotten him. I am going to search for a cup of tea—or shall it be punch, Mr. Illington?"

"Tea, please," he replied, disconsolately, as she hurried off.

He found himself confronted by a good-looking young woman in a soft gray dress and a neat white apron, with whom he entered upon a spasmodic conversation, in which both made commonplace remarks that were promptly forgotten. By the time Camilla returned with the tea and some cakes he was fairly surrounded, for the minuet had been concluded

and there was a mad hubbub in his corner, during which the white apron escaped. He had a solemn miss on one knee and an energetic knickerbockered boy on the other. The latter was fruitlessly endeavoring to disarrange Illington's tie under pretense of wonderment as to how the knot got together. He gave the cakes to the boy and, with the tea untasted, was dragged off to spend an extraordinary half-hour as the only available giant in a game of childish ingenuity growing out of Camilla's fairy-tale. From this he emerged in some appreciable disorder, being deserted by his dwarfs on the first intimation that somewhere there was going to be something good to eat.

When Mrs. Escott bustled through the confusion he pleaded an engagement as an excuse for retiring, and walked rather reluctantly toward the hall. He experienced an agreeable feeling to discover that Camilla did not propose to permit him to go without a farewell.

She came upon him as a servant was helping him into his coat.

"I was afraid you'd get away, and I wanted to say something about Mildred; I had intended to when we were—were interrupted. The poor girl is horribly in the blues, and goes about moping dreadfully. I wanted to ask you about Mr. Brent. Do you think it would be a good thing—I mean, do you think it would help any if he called on Mildred?"

"She has asked him to call," he answered, guardedly.

"Yes, I know, but I find myself doubting the wisdom of it—she was awfully fond of him. Oh, the whole affair has had such a miserable effect at the house! Jack groped around all morning in a senselessly dazed manner, and Mildred wouldn't come down to breakfast, and we've had a gray old time of it altogether. I was glad to get away and to come here, where the children are, just to shake it off. Did—did Mr. Brent tell you anything?"

"He told me what almost everybody knows, I suppose," he re-

marked, with distinct evasion. "He isn't the most cheerful of companions, either, if it comes to that. I think he wants to see her and yet dreads it."

"Which is exactly the trouble with Mildred. I wish—but I suppose there's nothing we can do about it, is there?"

He pulled at his gloves, replying thoughtfully:

"I don't know that there is. The best thing is for them to meet and have it over; that is the natural course, however sympathetic we are."

He moved to the door, then asked, quite suddenly:

"When am I going to see you again?"

She was a little disconcerted.

"At any time, of course. Naturally, I've got lots of places to go. If you're at Mrs. Menlo's dance to-morrow night you may see me." Then, with reckless curiosity: "Or are you out somewhere else?"

"No," with becoming gravity. "Mrs. Menlo was kind enough to remember me, and I accepted."

He appeared in no hurry, but saw nothing consistent to do except go.

"How singular we should find ourselves going to the same places, isn't it?" she asked, with astonishing innocence. "You remember we used to remark it my first season out, when we met everywhere?"

"I remember," he declared, impulsively, and then recollected that the footman was within hearing distance. "It's a very small world, you know, and—" he concluded lamely—"you'll get cold in the draught if you are not careful."

"It is careless of me. Good-afternoon."

He ran lightly down the steps and walked off rather aimlessly. Singularly enough, he had proceeded several blocks, and was quite away from the direction in which he desired to go, when he discovered that the day was cold and that there were cabs in New York.

At the club he found Brent only after a search. That individual, after an afternoon of greetings that undoubtedly wearied him, although he

stood them for the first hour heroically enough, had retreated to the writing-room under the excuse of important correspondence. Here Illington discovered him behind a convenient screen, and then remembered that he had a necessary communication for Mrs. Menlo, over which he smiled as he wrote.

"Well, how goes it?" he asked of Brent, this off his mind.

"Rather badly, to tell the truth, Tom. Reminiscences are boring, particularly when you tell them yourself. I think I shall make up a new list of desirable acquaintances here, to include those that do not ask me for what most people seem to call 'the story of my life.'"

"Not a bad idea; but don't talk as if you had written the final chapter. You've 'minded' very well, as they say to the naughty children, for the afternoon at least, and now I'm going to take you out to some quiet little place for dinner—we can't be quiet here, with you and your romance of the wild West—and afterward for a turn or two at the music halls. Are you prepared for that?"

The joy of his demeanor did not escape Brent, who, indeed, found himself envying it.

"You appear to be feeling rather the better for something," he observed, dryly. "A pleasant call?"

Illington flushed, possibly because he knew Brent was watching him closely.

"Y-yes," he hesitated. "Dropped in on Mrs. Escott's children—a little birthday-party, you know. It was jolly enough—I beg pardon." Someone had come hurriedly into their section of the room and accidentally stumbled against him. He looked up.

"Why, it's Trenton!" he exclaimed. "Trenton, I say——"

The man paused, glanced at Illington's companion, uttered some unintelligible excuse and hurried away. He had turned extraordinarily pale. Illington looked after him.

"Queer way for Trenton to act! Don't you think he recognized you? You remember him, don't you?"

Brent got up and took his packet of letters.

"I didn't know him very well; only met casually; he was Mil—Mrs. Trenton's lawyer. Come; let's go."

Illington followed him out in some perturbation. The little incident perplexed him, particularly Trenton's unusual manner, and he found himself recurring to it throughout the evening.

V

ALTHOUGH Illington had been established in New York but three weeks, and was only now beginning to go out, his quarters had become familiar as a place of rendezvous for a certain set—a circumstance not displeasing, since he liked to have people about him. Most of the bachelors he knew had a club existence that was almost perpetual, and to them a "run in on Illington" for a chat after the theatre and a little luncheon provided by Denners became an agreeable experience once in a while. Illington took his club moderately and experienced a sensation of pity for the inveterate victim of such a life. Ten years of it usually meant a joyless career of bachelorhood and an unending vista of trouble over the chops for breakfast.

The little midnight circle at Illington's gradually widened. Somebody always dropped in, whether the occupant of the premises was there or not, and Denners's very excellent and comprehensive understanding of the sideboard was a great consolation. This evening, when Illington and Brent came in, bringing with them Ferdie Acton and Willie Tremaine, whom they had picked up at a music hall, they found Stockton present with Van Marsen and a tall, slender and melancholy young man, with a drooping mustache and a very extraordinary waistcoat. Everybody knew everybody save this individual, but Van Marsen quickly relieved the situation.

"Gentlemen, my friend, the Duke of Ducketshire, *alias* Bagby Dorr, called Dorry. Dorry, this is Brent,

the man the newspapers are telling about, and who has been out West, scalping Indians and climbing the Alps; there is Illington, whose hospitality you are enjoying under the impression that it is mine; here is Acton and here Tremaine, the india-rubber boy."

The somewhat elaborate presentation did not embarrass the Duke of Ducketshire, *alias* Bagby Dorr, called Dorry, for he gravely assured each person presented that he was simply delighted. After this he relapsed into dreamy meditation before the fire.

"Why does Van Marsen introduce the duke under an *alias*?" asked Illington of Ferdie, in an aside.

"That's Van's humor, and Dorr is a stage name. He's actually a duke, too; came over here hard up, but went with the best people; found he'd debts to pay, went on the stage. He made his debut a few weeks ago in a society comedy, and all the swells drove down to the theatre to give him a jolly send-off. He isn't half-bad, and, of course, it's profitable. There's one unfortunate feature. Do you notice his waistcoat?"

"Yes."

"He sets the pace in waistcoats. We've all got to come to them, and yet everybody realizes that his colors are something fierce. He wore modest grays when he came here, and we all laid in a stock. One day he came out in yellow, and now look at him—red!"

"But why on earth does the man wear a waistcoat at all in the evening?"

"Oh, I guess that's eccentricity; or else he's just come from the theatre, and probably wasn't intending to drop in anywhere. Van Marsen has taken him up; Van's an awful crank on the theatre, you know. He knows all about the actors, and is writing his personal views on the stage—for private distribution, of course. He says it would never do for him to make public his real views."

Van Marsen had evidently been interrupted in his favorite theme when Illington and his friends came in, for,

now that everybody was settled, he remarked significantly to Brent that he had that evening seen one act of the latest Parisian comedy, and didn't care for it. "And as I was just saying to Stockton and Dorry," he resumed, complacently, "it isn't difficult to be smart. The whole art of society lies in trying not to be. Think what a hideous life we'd lead if we had to go on as they fancy we do in the plays!" Although this was apropos of nothing, Van Marsen appeared to think he had made a point.

"As a matter of fact," observed Tremaine, "I think we do go on considerably as they fancy we do in the plays. I find life about as dull as the ordinary society comedy."

Illington smiled.

"Tremaine," he said, "you might cable that to Pinero."

"It isn't that they're dull," objected Stockton, "but unreal. They're like one of those fancy-dress affairs old Mrs. Edgerton delights in giving once a year. She really does it in order to appear as *Juliet—en masque*, of course. The illusion is fair until she gets to the table. She reminds me of the old spinster in Carton's play, you remember, who went about with a sheep under her arm looking for companionship."

Ferdie divorced himself from a very strong cigarette. "Carton—didn't he dramatize something or other?"

Van Marsen looked at him pityingly.

"Yes; the race-track."

"I cannot keep ahead of these book plays," continued Ferdie, innocently. "They confuse me. I don't read the books any more, but wait until they get on the stage."

"But the dramatizations are nothing like the books," persisted Tremaine.

"So much the better for the books," declared Ferdie.

"Ferdie is like old Mr. Curlow," said Van Marsen. "Since the religious plays came in he has stopped going to church, and worships at the theatre instead. I told him he was

making a mistake—that the churches were vastly more dramatic. He declared he didn't care about that feature of it, and had only become interested in observing what the playwrights would do next, and that he thought they would eventually dramatize the Book of Genesis if anybody could be found to play the serpent. Curlow is smart in his way—awfully literary, but rather impious. When somebody asked him if he had ever read the Bible, he said he had, but that it was always difficult to get interested in a collaborated work."

Denners was moving quietly about with some long glasses, and Van Marsen's remarks were digested in silence for a time, until Illington reopened the original subject.

"I think there's some merit in dramatizations," he conceded. "Now what an education for the young is offered by Mr. Fitch, who is systematically dramatizing all of our historical noteworthies, or by Mr. Thomas, who dramatizes the State geographies. Think of the possibilities! As soon as Mr. Fitch makes a play out of George Washington he can go right down the line of Presidents and find material for years to come, while Mr. Thomas will never be without titles so long as we continue to expand our territory."

The Duke of Ducketshire looked at Illington with languid interest.

"Are Mr. Thomas and Mr. Fitch the only Americans that write plays?"

"Oh, indeed, no; they are merely the only ones that get them produced."

The duke appeared to be perplexed.

"Er—in London we all went to see Mr. Gillette, said to be from here; rattlingly clever chap; acted in his own piece, you know; hear he's doing something in New York now."

Van Marsen contemplated the duke.

"He is—detective work."

"How extraordinary—really expected to hear from him again."

The duke lapsed into silence.

Ferdie, speaking generally, and through the bottom of his glass of

Scotch, wanted to know if anybody had seen the new piece at the Empire. Van Marsen's reply had a touch of injured severity about it:

"I have seen everything at the Empire, even to John Drew's new grimace."

"I remember the old one," interposed Tremaine. "Isn't it he who usually plays the part of the moral young man who gives advice to immoral young men about running away with somebody's wife?"

"That is his general tendency," acknowledged the authority, "but you must remember that it is largely the author's fault. For myself, I am rather tired of that sort of thing. Have you ever considered that Mr. Jones and Mr. Pinero invariably stop proceedings just where they are most interesting, simply because someone steps in with advice? It's a strange matter, but on the stage and in life, advice is about the only thing that most people seem never to be out of. If ever I write a play I shall allow the young married woman to really run away with the wicked earl, and stop the unnecessary sentiment."

"Impossible," declared Brent. "You would shock society."

"My dear sir, you cannot shock society; it is difficult enough to even interest it."

Ferdie seemed inclined to allow Van Marsen full play, and although he directed his next observation to Illington, he knew perfectly well that the theatrical dilettante would take up the subject.

"I saw 'Barbara Frietchie' the other night," he said. "Marlowe is a great actress."

"She shoots well," acknowledged Van Marsen. "It isn't so very difficult to put unnecessary people out of the way. I always thought that Mrs. Fiske murdered entertainingly in 'Tess.'"

Brent laughed. "I am glad I know nothing of the modern drama. It appears to be even more sanguinary than the tragedies. Before long, 'Romeo and Juliet' may be considered new."

"It is new," asserted Illington. "Mr. Frohman wrote it for Miss Adams only last season."

"Van has a plan to revive 'Hamlet,'" prattled Ferdie. "He thinks he could arrange for it a modern cast that would make it more attractive than it's ordinarily played."

Van Marsen studied the ashen end of his cigar.

"Mr. Goodwin would play the title part," he acknowledged, deliberately. "Tragedies are ordinarily so stuffy and unnatural! I contemplate that he would invest 'Hamlet' with human interest. In fact, my version of the play would be given entirely by comedians—you see, they are not in the rut, and would bring novelty of conception."

"In that case," volunteered Tremaine, "I suggest Miss Irwin for the *Ophelia*; she might sing some lively new composition in place of the absurdly sentimental song *Ophelia* always droons in the mad scene."

"But who would play the *Ghost*?"

"Mr. Hopper, naturally," said Van Marsen. "The *Ghost* is in reality a comedy part, and has been treated too seriously by the traditional actors. I feel that Mr. Hopper would give an entirely original exposition and that the *Ghost* would become what Shakespeare undoubtedly intended—a leading character. And then I would introduce madrigals and quartets in the performance, all written by Mr. Herbert, who composes all the comic operas."

"I would like to witness your 'Hamlet,'" asserted Brent. "Do you think it would run very long?"

"About one act," interposed Ferdie.

"On the contrary," objected Van Marsen, "it would have a perpetual value, since it would turn all of our comedians into the line they so earnestly prefer, and would consequently relieve the stage of much of its present nonsense."

"But what would the tragedians do?"

"By the rule of *vice versa*, go into comedy. We should then discover

how bad the comedians really were."

The Duke of Ducketshire, aroused by the gentle deference of Denners, who had diplomatically intimated that his glass had long been emptied, came out of the mysteries of silent meditation to ask the opinion of Van Marsen on the status of the stage abroad and the question of its morality in general.

"My dear Dorry," returned the other, "I have no time to concern myself with the stage abroad. Our own worries me far too greatly, and I prefer a limited sphere. As for morality, it isn't the stage that is immoral, but the managers."

"And the actors?"

"Are paragons of virtue."

"Are you quite sure of that?"

"Positive—they've told me so themselves."

Ferdie rolled another cigarette on which his monogram shone brilliantly in gold.

"Bless me, Van Marsen, do you mean to say that you believe everything people tell you?"

"It is one of the strict rules of my life and elevates the standard of civilization. People never think of telling you any evil of themselves, and so I keep them on the subject of their virtues as long as possible. It is convenient, and even if it bores me it pleases them."

Stockton, who had busied himself at the sideboard with a large bowl and some strange incidentals that he resolved, after some delay, into a drink of which he only knew the secret, now announced that his task had been completed and signified Denners to remove the other glasses.

"That's a very good preachment, Van," he remarked, as he joined the group again, "considering that you're the most inveterate gossip in New York."

Van Marsen blandly stroked his mustache.

"I bow to the canons of society," he said. "My duty is to entertain it, and gossip is one of the necessities. Without it we would be torn by suspicions. And even you, Stockton,

cannot say that I ever repeat gossip."

"By George, no, Van; I really believe you make it."

Van Marsen smiled placidly.

"I have been called inventive," he acknowledged, "but I am never malicious. My *divertissement* is perfectly innocent, as I will illustrate: I am talking with Mrs. Carrynews at an evening party. I find her dull, and can hit upon nothing to disturb the tedium. Finally I say: 'Did you hear that Mrs. Propriety was found dining out alone, at midnight, with—well, not with Mr. Propriety?' The lady becomes necessarily interested, and at the same time guarded, while I nonchalantly change the subject to the decorations, or admire her gown. As soon as she may she seeks out her most confidential friend and repeats 'the very queer remark dropped, quite by accident, by Mr. Van Marsen.' Or perhaps she will protect me by reference to 'a man who knows.' Presently everybody is regarding Mrs. Propriety curiously. The gathering is immensely stirred, and as the inevitable must happen, I am finally entreated to whisper the name of the wretch. I at once seek out Mrs. Propriety, and in the most conspicuous manner, remark: 'I have been telling Mrs. Carrynews of your late supper at Blank's the other night!' Here we are at the verge of a scandal, but instead of turning pale, Mrs. Propriety merely remarks: 'You mustn't scold me about that any more. Fancy, Mr. Van Marsen actually objected to my dining with my ten-year-old son, on the ground that he ought to have been in bed!' Of course, Mrs. Carrynews is chagrined; but what is her alternative? She finds something pleasant to say on her appearance, and I leave them chatting, like the dear friends they are. And I have been the instrument of making what had threatened to be an otherwise dull evening extremely entertaining for all concerned."

"That is rather better than your views of the stage," commented Illington; "but don't you find it somewhat dangerous at times?"

"I never tread on dangerous ground. I am always perfectly sure of whom I'm talking."

Denners distributed the Stockton product, which proved to be of a thick golden yellow, and was universally complimented.

"It's the only thing I do well," observed the inventor. "I call it the Relish, and you cannot get it at the clubs. It takes an awful time to mix—properly."

"Let me warn you that it is insidious," said Illington. "An extraordinary scandal came out of it at Lenox, where he made it for a gathering of estimable ladies at an afternoon. You see, he told them that it was merely a confection, and they unsuspectingly took three cups of it all round. I really cannot repeat all that followed, but it is said that poor Mrs. Eryllyne insisted on running her own automobile when she finally got into the street, and that it climbed absurdly up the steps of a near-by house. Only the presence of mind of the driver saved her from arrest. And thus is the peace of our homes corrupted by the monster drink—served by Stockton as a chocolate. Whatever is wrong, Van?"

Van Marsen, who was industriously pulling at his coat, indicated the duke.

"I'm afraid he's going to sing," he whispered. "We must get away; he is at his worst when he sings, and mixing Scotch with nogg is bad for him." He raised his voice, saying generally, "Yes, it's late." He whispered to Ferdie, who got up unsteadily and announced that he would take the duke in his growler and set him down wherever he wished to go. This had the effect of diverting the visitor from what he had apparently in mind, for he came to his feet elaborately and thanked Stockton warmly, if mistakenly, for "the best rarebit he had ever enjoyed."

The movement presaged a general departure, and Denners brought coats, into which the visitors hustled, talking confusedly of nothing whatever. Illington saw them to the stairs in the outer passage, where Van Marsen's

worst fears were confirmed, since the duke was singing boisterously and threatening to accomplish the entire flight in three steps. He returned to find Brent sitting listlessly beside the table.

"You should have taken some of Stockton's medicine of cheer," he said, after contemplating his companion. "Why is it you can't get out of your blue devils?"

Brent stirred irritably and started for his room.

"What rot these people talk!" he began. "Not a single one of them appears to have a definite purpose at all."

Illington took up his cup of nogg.

"Oh, yes, they have—wait until you see them play poker."

"I hope they play it better than they play at living. I don't want to appear bored, but the whole thing seems so vapid after you've once got away from it. Good-night."

Illington took up a cigar and mused for a time before the fire. He concluded that, while Brent was right, it would be unnecessary to tell him so. Then his thoughts went back over the day, but there was no part in them for the men who had just gone. He heard the prattle of children and saw the priestess with the fairy-book.

VI

MRS. MENLO's dancing-party, which was faithfully designated as a "large affair" in the industrious chronicles of society the morning after, was given for her second daughter, and resulted in a very great crush indeed, since it was Mrs. Menlo's delight to run to crushes. Here Illington found himself more at home than he had at some of the more numerically select gatherings, since there were old acquaintances in the throng who greeted him with apparent sincerity and then asked somebody else for personal information concerning him. He was not a great stickler for the odd indulgences of society, and it did not pique him to discover that the predominant

interest over his return to this life was found in his commercial value. While it was pleasant to be considered among friends, even of this sort, he congratulated himself on the wisdom he had shown in dropping what many fondly called a "fashionable career" some years before, when his fortunes were perilously near an ebb. It is hard to be rated very far down the list in the society Bradstreet's. He had come back to his own temporarily, and partly as an experiment, and while he did not enjoy the discussion and inevitable question his return created, he condoned them out of past experiences. It was not particularly agreeable, as an instance, to overhear what he was just now being compelled to overhear while randomly conversing with Mrs. Menlo's second hopeful. But the situation so contrived itself that Mrs. Noel, who stood near by, and in blissful unconsciousness of the proximity of her subject, was relating his circumstances to an inquiring friend.

"Oh, perfectly nice and awfully sensible," she was assuring a young lady in pink. "You must remember—or at least your papa will—Bayard Illington, his father. He was a banker, and Tom was brought up remarkably well, even though it was by his maiden aunt—God rest her soul. How that old woman did use to annoy me! When Illington died—it was after Tom had finished at college—it was found that the poor boy had a mere pittance. He didn't choose to affect society on a limited income, and as he didn't care for New York without a large one, he went West—Chicago, I believe. It seems that some time or other everybody does go there, just for the sake of coming away. In any event, he's done something perfectly wonderful with railroads; built 'em, I believe, or financed them, or whatever it is one does with railroads, and is out of it quite well. Noel is a particular friend of Tom's and says he's a good boy and not spoiled. He wishes our William was more like him, but I tell him that there's no need making William's head ache

over horrid bank accounts. And he's a lovely catch for somebody——"

Mrs. Menlo's second scattered the proprieties by bursting into a laugh at Illington's manifest discomfiture, and Mrs. Noel turned, to discover that something peculiar had happened. She made the best of a bad matter by promptly presenting the young woman in pink and declaring:

"I've been saying the nicest things about you; and really, it does seem good to have you here. Is it quite true that you have invaded us for the purpose of carrying off somebody?"

"Would it be discreet to admit that in the presence of a crowd?" he returned, lightly. "You must remember I am at the mercy of more than one."

He glanced boldly and directly at the young woman in pink and then at Mrs. Menlo's second.

"There are so many I would like to carry off, you know."

The young lady in pink made a desperate effort at a sally.

"And do they allow more than one—in Chicago?"

"Not at one time, of course," he replied, seriously. "I am just now collecting addresses."

"He isn't particularly bright," thought the young lady in pink. She was glad when someone that was bright came up to take her away. Mrs. Menlo's second deserted also, pausing long enough to laugh at him and say:

"You see, listeners sometimes *do* hear good of themselves—particularly when old flames are about."

He excused this on the ground of her youth, while Mrs. Noel came breezily into the breach.

"These young people! Surely the chit doesn't seriously consider you so old nor me so young that she sees in me a past attachment! If this is a plot, my dear Tom, remember that I can never be more than a mother to you. And then there's Noel, too. No scandal at my age."

"Is it ever too late for a scandal, Mrs. Noel?"

"That's according to one's views of them. Now, to my thinking, a scandal is very like a railway disaster—

exciting to read about, but dreadfully unpleasant to experience."

"I know so little about either," declared Illington, modestly. "How do they compare with dancing-parties?"

"I couldn't say. Dangers ought to lurk here, though, considering the number of pretty girls about; or perhaps you don't consider pretty girls dangerous any longer."

"That is according to the quality of prettiness and to the age of the impressionable one. Now I am thirty-four, and beyond the tempestuous point."

"But you are still single—and rich."

"You forget that young women have ceased marrying for money."

"How old-fashioned the world is getting, to be sure."

"Yes; even the fairy-tales are so good that it is no longer thought necessary to point a moral."

"And the worst thing about raising the standard of morality is that it gives one nothing whatever to talk about."

"Which accounts for the sheer idiocy of my conversation. I saw Noel yesterday, and I must say that you seem to be treating him remarkably well. He's every bit as young—well, as he ought to be."

"Oh, Noel gets on wonderfully well with me. But I can't reconcile myself to being the mother of a boy of eighteen. Let me give you a bit of advice: When you marry, don't let your wife see too much of you; it will pay. That's how Noel and I come to last as we do."

They were parted by the exigencies of social greetings, and soon after Illington found himself attached to a sombre young person whose name had escaped him—a fact that perplexed him for a good half-hour. In the shuffling about when the dancing began, the sombre lady seemed always a part of him. There was no escape. He had blindly gone in for more numbers on the dancing card than were called for by strict propriety, and this without a single protest from her. And

there were nowhere any evidences of Camilla. This distracted him, and he found himself asking the sombre young lady to repeat her remarks. When he broke with her it was with the perfectly satisfied belief that she must have considered him an ass, if she had cared to say so. He went searchingly through the overcrowded rooms, danced with somebody, and then searched again. By ten o'clock he had extraordinary visions of having danced only with particular costumes—faces and names vanished. He recalled the sombre lady and a slim-waisted creature in white who proved to be very clumsy for her weight. And there was another in violet and one in blue—a hideous, rainbow assortment of feminines, each in succession more uninteresting than the last. He also knew that he had suffered a great number of introductions and had wasted words idly on topics that he knew nothing about, and that were in no sense important, anyway. He was considering crossly that the worst thing about being remembered was the vivid imagination required, when his heart leaped as if it belonged to the hero of a novel, or a mere school-boy, for here was Camilla coming toward him. In his relief at seeing her he failed utterly to dissemble, and straightway blurted:

"I've been looking for you everywhere."

She flushed a little from the undoubted eagerness of his tone and said:

"I was shockingly late; Mrs. Menlo will never forgive me. For a time I gave it up, and then Jack brought me at last. Mildred's been dreadfully snuffy all day, and Jack might as well be in an insane asylum. It's queer, but do you know, I feel as if I was standing on the brink of what the dramatists call a 'disclosure.' It's uncomfortable, and the worst of it is I cannot understand it."

He saw that she appeared to be genuinely distressed, but promptly claimed her for the next dance, after which he ruefully discovered that he had previously sought the succeeding

number from the sombre young lady. He went heroically about his task, and reinstalled himself in her graces.

When he met Camilla again they moved away, as by mutual understanding, through the throng and out into one of the connecting but less crowded rooms. The unanimity with which they sought this temporary seclusion—there happened to be two vacant chairs in a receding window—seemed to inspire them simultaneously, the moment they were seated, with a certain sense of embarrassment. Each had the knowledge of having caught the other in some secret personal thought, and Camilla silently deplored the haste she felt she had unwarrantably shown. She half-rose and then sank back.

"You must be tired dancing." He started, lamely enough, to cast about for some excuse.

"Not necessarily, considering that I have been here about thirty minutes and have danced but twice."

He picked vexatiously at a rose he had been carrying, and then, remembering that it had been given him by the sombre lady at some mad moment, he threw it down.

"What a shame!" she declared, "to abuse your pretty favor so. Here, give it me."

He picked it up and handed it over.

"To tell the truth, then, I'm tired," he said. "You know we are a selfish lot, and I've been going it all the evening. And then, Camilla, I was disappointed not to find you. It's only when we meet like this, accidentally, you know, that I have half a chance to talk with you."

"And do you think we ought to go round to people's houses in the midst of crushes, seeking some particular place to converse, to the exclusion of the entertainment provided? Even though all this is—" and her eyes were averted—"accidental."

"If I thought you came here, all this way, and so late, too, just to meet me, I'd—I'd be the happiest man in the world."

He couldn't have resisted saying that, although he at once recognized

the awkwardness of it. She looked at him sternly.

"What assurance! Did you bring that from Chicago? Do young women go out on cold nights there just for the purpose of meeting a man in a ball-room? I wouldn't jump at conclusions—it's wretched form."

He looked about helplessly, fully convinced that assumption, like familiarity, may breed contempt.

"I've wanted to see you, Camilla,—and, well, you know you told me that you expected to be here. I wouldn't have come otherwise."

Then and there this lady might have passed one remark that would have greatly simplified matters. He was prompt to recognize this. Indeed, he expected it. Which proved that he knew nothing about women, since the remark went unsaid, and she proceeded, contrarily:

"You have been in New York three weeks, and I met you but three nights ago. Yesterday you were at Mrs. Escott's—or was it the day before? To-night you are here. It occurs to me that if I am included in the sights of this city, you have made very good use of your time, this week at least. If I am so important in this round of gaiety, what were you doing during the first two weeks and before I got back to town?"

"Waiting for you to come," he announced, promptly.

She had nothing to say. Decidedly, he was persistent.

"You make me think of a verse I heard in a comic opera recently," he went on. "It was in a song:

"The Queen upon her throne,
The maiden in her dairy,
Are both alike—they're quite contrary."

"Really," she exclaimed, "if it's a matter of verse, it seems to me you ought to go to the poets, in the accepted manner, and not to the librettists and their nursery jingles."

"I can't memorize from the poets."

"Lack of application?"

"No; capacity. The only thing I know in that line is a New Year's poem, and it doesn't fit."

"Fit what?"

"My situation."

"Oh!"

He was fired with a sudden purpose to put an end, if possible, to this fencing.

"Most poetry is silly, anyway. I couldn't find anything that would tell me what I should like to tell."

"All the better reason for sticking sensibly to prose, then," she observed.

"But will you tell me one thing before we taboo the subject, as I feel you are about to do? Do you know anything that will rhyme with Chicago?"

"I'm sure I don't believe anything could."

"No; and there's no earthly rhyme telling why a fellow who wasn't as well off in the world as he wanted to be, went there and made a fight because of someone he thought a lot of; and how he wondered and wondered if the someone wouldn't find someone else, no matter what he thought about it; and how it made him perfectly wild—"

She caught at the arm of the wicker chair, but looked at him serenely.

"Mr. Illington, you are getting involved."

"Miss Traverton, I am perfectly well aware of that, and there is reason enough for it. You are the reason, and you are becoming a decidedly maddening reason. Why do you play about with me this way?"

"You must remember that I am not a *débutante*, but a woman of some experience. I know what you are about to say—it's been said often enough. There is no need for excitement. I merely ask you to remember that, although partly secluded, we are, nevertheless, in a public place, and that presently we shall be called upon to resume our social duties. You may proceed."

Her extraordinary words astonished him. Finally he said, very gravely:

"Camilla, I love you."

There was no evidence of jest in her reply. She gave it, apparently,

as a mere statement of an interesting but not original fact.

"Yes; that is what the others said."

It wasn't at all as Illington had fancied it would be, and he didn't know quite what to make of it. There was no sign of leniency about Camilla, who sat passively toying with the rose—the other girl's rose. When he managed to speak he did so evenly and with a very clear sense of what it was proper to do.

"I am honestly sorry to have made the mistake, Camilla—only it isn't quite fair to include me with 'the others.' I have thought so often of you, and you encouraged me so much out there with your kindly, helpful letters. And since I've seen you again—well, I just couldn't help it. I couldn't have told you this before—before I went away. for I didn't think it would be fair. It appears that it is well I didn't. And I'm sorry—I've spoiled your evening, too, I dare say."

She heard him out, and then said, rather tritely:

"At least we can keep on being good friends."

"I'm afraid not; I'm not one of 'the others' kind. I'm too much in love with you to be a friend, good or otherwise."

All at once he had a sense that Camilla was laughing softly. It hurt him, and he got up quickly, only to find that she had slipped a detaining hand in his and was looking up, smiling through her tears.

"Camilla—" he began, bewilderedly.

"You wouldn't finish the scene," she pleaded. "You're such a bad love-maker, after all. It is usual to say, 'What is your answer?' and you didn't even put the question. But, dear, I like you all the better for it!"

It might as well be remarked, as Camilla had warned him, that this was a somewhat public place. This did not prevent him holding her hand very tightly indeed, even when someone passed them and remarked upon it to someone's companion. But there were many things unexplained. The sombre girl, who saw them dancing

a little while afterward, cut Illington forthwith when she saw that her favor, greatly crumpled, was being worn by Camilla Traverton. She thought that sort of thing wasn't nice. Not that Mr. Illington was any better than a hundred young men in society, but he had been so very jolly and sincere.

Later, when they rode away together, with Jack Trenton moodily in one corner of the brougham, they sat stiffly, looking straight before them and murmuring commonplaces. Such are the necessities of propriety—and the curse of modern improvements in the illumination of vehicles.

VII

THE day was gray, and interesting only from the uncertainty one experienced in the matter of wearing apparel on leaving the house. Just now a disagreeable murk prevailed, which might be at any time succeeded by coldness sufficient for furs or by a Midwinter gentleness that called only for the trappings of early Spring. Woman-like, Camilla thought of these incidentals as she looked from the window of the breakfast-room at the Trentons' and contemplated the absolute inactivity of the Avenue. She withdrew quickly, for the outlook was more depressing than she had anticipated. Within, there was at least a merry, dancing fire of hickory, and if Mildred did look worn and disconsolate—as was usual of late—there was life enough in the parrot. She amused herself with this absurdly vain bird for a while and then seriously considered going upstairs. Mildred spoke to her:

"Are you going out anywhere to-day, dear?"

"Mrs. Escott is taking me for a run-in at the Wheatleys'—something informal, I believe, with music, at two o'clock."

She walked over to Mildred's side.

"Do you realize," she asked, "that you haven't been anywhere for quite a time, and that Friday is your day?"

"No doubt I shall feel better by then; I haven't been strong at all, and it would have been torture to talk to people this week. I don't know just what is the matter with me."

Camilla sank down on the stool at her feet.

"Yes, you do, Mildred; and I know. You are worried over Mr. Brent. What is the sense of combating that? There is nothing extraordinary about it, and there is no reason why he shouldn't call."

Mrs. Trenton looked sadly into the fire.

"I have asked him," she said, "to come any time—but somehow he doesn't seem to care about it." The paper she had been reading slipped to the floor. "It isn't altogether that, Camilla, although I was dreadfully shocked, and there are some things about his return that I don't understand, and the whole affair is so gruesome—but I'm really not well. Jack has been urging me to go away, and I don't know that he isn't right about it. I need a tonic, and perhaps travel will give it."

"Go away now? Why, you've been back such a short time, and then—well, then *me*, Mildred. Papa and Aunt Charlotte won't be home for two months, and I've no place to go. I can't install myself in that dreary old house alone—it's bad enough to have to run in and look after the servants."

"You could go to Mrs. Escott's, as you have been doing now and then," said Mildred, gently.

"She's so fussy, and the house is always full of the strangest people—relatives of hers from the interior. I often wonder where she gets them."

"Or you could go to mother's."

"And wreck the calm of the dear old lady by dragging her about as a chaperon at her age? You know she doesn't go out only when necessary, and this younger set would bore her to death."

Mildred leaned over and kissed her.

"I'm not really sick, dear, only feeling a little dull and downhearted and confused; it is silly, I know, but I'll try to mope along until it leaves.

It's a shame to spoil your season, and—"

Camilla looked up merrily.

"And my 'chances,' were you going to say?—yes, you were. Well, let me tell you, they are brighter. I have at last met a man—the man, if you please. So you see what is likely to happen if you don't look out for me."

"Is—is it somebody you told me about—oh, quite a long time ago, it seems now, just after you were out, if I remember; somebody you were going to wait for, as you said?"

"Yes, and I've waited, Mildred, and—it's really, really come true, just as such things do—sometimes."

"Sometimes," repeated Mildred, sorrowfully.

"Ah, I forgot—I've pained you; please forgive me. Why, it's rather peculiar—isn't it?—he's a great friend of Mr. Brent's. He has made me very happy, Milly."

She embraced the elder woman enthusiastically.

"Now try to be a little more life-like," she lectured, turning over the stool in her exuberance, "and at least companionable to an intended bride who was threatened with spinsterhood."

She printed a hurried kiss somewhere on Mildred's hair and gave her an encouraging pat on the head, after which she ran upstairs and cogitated on the terrors of a morning indoors, spiritless as was the atmosphere outside. She recalled a half-exacted promise to go shopping with the Aarons girl at eleven, and began her preparations in delight. When she came down, attired for the street, Mildred was in the library with her husband. They were looking over their morning mail, and abruptly ceased talking as she entered. Their manner indicated that she had interrupted a family discussion. Jack gave her some personal letters, and she withdrew, after stating her plans and admonishing Mildred not to keep luncheon waiting for her.

Mildred had been reading a note, which was uppermost in her mail,

and this she silently handed to her husband. He had held it uneasily, when Camilla entered, and as the door closed upon her, he resumed:

"You really think you ought to see him, Mildred?"

"Why not? As you see, he says he will call this afternoon. He never was a stickler for the social proprieties, and a week ago I wrote him to come at any time. Possibly he has delayed on account of other engagements—although I hear he has not gone out frequently." She spoke with an intimation of bitterness, though it was ever so slight.

"I can imagine that such a meeting would be painful to you both," remarked Trenton. "Frankly, I don't think it best. And there is the alternative of being not at home."

Her eyes sought his face curiously. "Perhaps it *would* hurt more than harm," she said, musingly. "Yet why should I not see him? He is an old friend. I once considered him more than that, you know. It is all so extraordinary—his life out there and his reported death. So strange and—there was a little catch in her voice—"so sad."

There was a dull pain in the eyes of the man before her, and he appeared to be debating something—struggling within himself. He walked over to her.

"I remember what our understanding was when you consented to marry me, Mildred. I didn't suppose I'd ever have reason to refer to it again, but I want you to tell me something. If Brent had come back, as he has now, at the time we were about to join our lives, even though you then supposed him to be dead all through the year, as you did, would matters have been any different between you and me? Would they?"

She regarded him in silence a little while. Then:

"That would have depended entirely on what he said, Jack. His silence was cruel; that was what hurt, but my love went with him to the grave. I told you this. As you say, we understood our relative positions

thoroughly. I cannot see why you bring it up."

His face quivered as he said, lowly: "I wanted to know if the old love had come back with him—from the grave."

Her cheeks reddened and there was just a flash of anger in her reply:

"I do not forget that I am your wife."

His eyes lighted at this and he seemed reassured.

"Do you think you are strong enough to meet him?" he asked, eagerly. "I have never seen you quite so upset. And seriously, Mildred, I don't like it."

He walked nervously about the room. It was the culmination of an apprehensive period during which he had watched and waited for what was now threateningly near at hand. The flight of days and nights to him had been long and full of imaginative terrors. Suddenly he brought himself to a standstill.

"As you say, you do not forget that you are my wife. I can forbid him the house."

"How strangely you talk!" she said. "It is as if it would not be right for me to meet him. I cannot understand you."

"Is it right to meet a man you loved as you loved him?"

She faced him, flaming at the innuendo.

"What are you saying? How dare you? Oh!"

She started to leave the room, but he rushed swiftly after her, catching her by one hand and drawing her back. There was no harshness in the action, and his impulse appeared to have overwhelmed him.

"Forgive me," he cried. "I didn't think what it meant. I am wretched, and haven't been myself for days."

She was plainly perplexed, wavering between anger at his words and a gentle pity for his distress. She walked haltingly back to the library table and seated herself. When he spoke again his voice and manner were peculiarly altered.

"Mildred," he asked, "if a man—

a husband—has done something so wrong that he feels he has wrecked the happiness of two people to gain a selfish end, and that end the winning of the woman he loved; if he planned in secret in a manner that was despicable, indeed, could he expect at least some absolution by confession?"

She was idly turning the leaves of a magazine and wondering at his unusual manner of speech. Into her senses crept an indefinable premonition, but she proved to be totally unprepared for the disclosure he made later.

"I do not quite follow you," she said. "Does this relate to me?"

He stood over her, quite still and very pale.

"Yes, Mildred, I am a man on the brink of being discovered in a perfidy. Foolishly enough, I have believed—certainly have hoped—to evade the inevitable. That is the natural thing when one is overtaken in a folly, or, if you will, a crime—counting the days as fate presses closer, lingering even over the hours, in some strange belief that there may be an avenue of escape. I know there is no escape for me, nor even a very long reprieve. There is mitigation in but one thing: When I came face to face with this crisis I had the instinctive manhood to want to come to you at once, but you delayed my confession. That crisis was on the night of your supper-party—the night we first knew that Elbridge Brent was in New York."

Her eyes were widely dilated, and in them he read astonishment and incomprehensible alarm.

"Am I to understand that you are talking of something—some wrong—directed at Elbridge and myself?" She stood up, facing him across the table. "And that—that you have known all along that he wasn't dead?"

"No—not that. I no more knew that Elbridge Brent was alive than you did at that time."

"But how—?"

"Let me finish." He found a peculiar solace in his own words, humiliating though they were. As he

went on with his recital, he looked up pleadingly now and then, but there was no reassurance in the rigid figure of the woman who stood before him.

"Possibly it is as well to make my statement one of facts, although I must protest that to me the affair is purely one of sentiment, and that at the time I acted entirely from sentimental motives. Therefore, you will understand, mine is not the premeditated villainy of the playhouse. You will remember, after Brent went away so suddenly and when your father died, your mother placed the family affairs in my hands as your lawyer. It was then that you closed the town house and shortly afterward went to Europe. At that time I did not know of your understanding with Brent. I came into your life in a purely business and professional capacity. Shut away from others, you were not inaccessible to me, from the necessity of circumstances. I will simply say that I loved you—I have loved you ever since, and more than ever I love you to-day. If there is any palliation for my act, it lies in that, and for that men have gone to even greater extremes than have I. Finally, within the short two months of our acquaintance, and when you were about to sail, I was bold enough to declare my feelings. Then you told of Brent and how you were waiting and praying and believing, even through all that silence and the mystery of his life, which no one knew. More than ever, I think, I began to appreciate the real depth and sincerity of a woman's affection, and after you had gone this was my thought by day and my dream by night—to win a woman like you. The ambition grew on me more and more; I couldn't evade it; and ever and always the woman was you. I don't know how I argued myself into the false position that he might go out of your life and that I could come into it. A man who develops his first passion at forty is not likely to think of obstacles. If he does, and the passion has become a part of his life, he will stop at nothing to sweep them aside. It is not

always even a matter of common honor. It was not with me.

"You had told me, after I had made my confession of love for you, that you constantly expected to hear from the man in whom you so implicitly believed, and one of your orders to me, as your counsel, was the prompt forwarding of all personal letters to your Continental addresses. In the weeks that followed I sent you many packets, but I doubt not that one single little letter, if only a line, would have made you happier than all the post contained. At last this letter came, but it never reached you. I may as well say that I never sent it."

The woman gave a cry that was short and plaintive. Her face was now as white as that of the man who stood over her, for she had fallen helplessly into the chair again, yet following every motion of his lips and every twinge in the muscles about his strong mouth. She continued to regard him searchingly and remorselessly, while he looked straight beyond her.

"If, in my hesitation over the right and wrong of it, I had stopped there, the results might have been very different. For I did hesitate, even to the extent of blaming myself for the manifest injustice of my act. Yet a plan that had come to me as I toyed with this letter grew steadily upon me. I saw one possible venture through which I might eventually win you. Finally I opened the letter and read it. I do not think I shall ever forget its contents. Somehow the lines were burned into my senses. I have even found myself repeating them, now and then—they come to me at some busy moment or when I think I am about to be happy, and they drive away my peace. There was one sentence: 'It is enough that I tell you I have redeemed myself, and that I believe I have earned the right to claim you. I thank God that the love of a good woman sustains me.' And throughout, it was the exaltation of a man who has conquered the evil in him and come into the light. I held back this letter, at first,

with a vague feeling that I must eventually forward it. I foresaw your joy in its receipt, and I knew the inevitable end. If I entertained any impulse for good, it was that I should cable you the news, for it was plain that the writer did not know of your absence from New York. Here came the second temptation, and you may consider the desperate outcome of this fight with myself at a time when I was willing to seize upon any method to take you away from this man. I answered the letter myself, forging your handwriting, and breaking off the engagement."

She opened her lips and would have spoken, but he went on, unheedingly:

"Somebody has said that the only objection most men have to following a path of villainy is the fear of detection. Among other things, I fought this fear, for I knew what detection meant. I had even carefully laid my plans to combat it. Strangely enough, as the circumstances proved, there was no necessity to so much as entertain it. I had pursued the course of the bad man in a theatrical performance, and from the nature of things it was to be expected that the hero or heroine would presently put an end to my machinations. I believed that Brent would write you again for an explanation, or possibly come to New York. He did neither. Instead, he vanished again. His brother, of whom I inquired, knew nothing of his whereabouts. When you returned, six months later, I was still free from discovery. I saw that his silence—as you believed—had hurt you deeply, and I could tell that you suffered. When, a long time after this, came the first news of Brent in the report that he and his party had perished in an exploring adventure, I could hardly believe it possible that such a culmination could come about in every-day affairs. It was like the finale to a drama of my own making, demonstrating the importance of what had appeared to be the impossible. I need not refer to the events leading up to our marriage. I don't know whether or not you were more shocked than I

was on learning, that evening at the supper-party, that Brent was alive—at least, I had more at stake. I recognized instantly the peril of discovery and that I had been living in a shallow paradise, after all. My first thought was to make it clear to you at once, since I knew what would be likely to come about through even a casual meeting with him. But this confession was deferred. I have thought since of a thousand impracticable plans of preventing a disclosure of my secret, and yet, when all is said, I see in it a fate it would be folly to contend against. I am simply overtaken by circumstances that I cannot escape. Since he has been here I have been haunted by fears—every time I have looked at you I have found myself wondering how you will learn the truth—from some chance remark of his or from the lips of your husband. And I have chosen to stand before you and expose myself in my own way. It is not a way that is at all admirable. I feel that I am a social criminal, and, God help me! worse than that—a man who has won a woman by fraud.”

He leaned, with a sudden sense of weakness, against the oaken table for support, for now that he had told his story the courage that sustained the recital seemed suddenly to desert him. With his keen perception of the effect of words, acquired in the practice of his profession, he knew at once that the verdict would be against him, and that he had made out only a very pitiable case indeed. It was not enough, under the circumstances, to offer the incessant and traditional plea—“I loved you, and it was because of that”—since he had made no sacrifice that was ennobling. The absolute selfishness of his course suddenly bore in upon him. Yet, for all this, there was no inconsiderable relief in the knowledge that the secret he had so long carried was shared by another, and that other his chief victim. The lonely responsibility of it had almost broken him, for he was a strangely inconsistent miscreant who could scarce be expected

to act out his part inflexibly to the end.

It seemed that she must have sat staring at him for hours, and that the library clock was ticking off an eternity of time. When she did break the silence, her voice was hard and almost strident.

“Once,” she said, “it seemed that I wanted to laugh at you. I wish I could laugh now. I find it almost impossible to comprehend what you have told me. I—I cannot describe just now how it affects me—I feel filled with rage, and yet—it is my pity that you want, is it not? It does not seem real, that you stand there and tell me of this thing, and I sit here and listen, and know that you have shut happiness away from me and made me a conventional prisoner. That’s what it amounts to. I told you when we made this marriage that I did not bring you the affection of a wife, but then you had, at least, my respect. I thought you had been kind to me at a time I most needed kindness. All this time you have been acting a part, thinking at last you might win something more than my esteem. You have been living a lie—a lie that involves my happiness—my very life. I do not pity you; I feel that I could hate you.”

Her head sank against her arms and, for the first time since she had been his wife, she abandoned herself to uncontrollable grief. That it was the grief of overwhelming dislike for him, as well as pity for herself, made it all the more terrible. From some impulse he put forth a hand to stroke her hair. She started as from a shock, shrinking from his touch as if it pained her. Eventually the resort to tears appeared to calm her, for when she looked at him again there was no outward evidence of a great anger.

“I don’t know that it was best for you to tell me this, after all. It is simply giving me a misery that is very hard to bear—and perhaps the discovery wouldn’t have come about as you have feared. Very often it is as well not to know the truth.”

"No," he answered, slowly, "it is not as well. Ah, how long I thought over that! The truth will come out, if not as it should, then in some way that brings more disaster than if it were confessed."

"Your object in telling me this, I suppose," she resumed, after a time, "is that we may keep our family skeleton closeted as best we may, with two instead of one to guard it? It is merely a shifting of the burden. I was thinking how Elbridge Brent must regard me, believing that I jilted him after all his sacrifice. The sudden surprise of his return distressed me a great deal, but one can bury an old affection even if one shudders at the tomb. One can even become accustomed to the ghost of it, without fear, but when it returns as a reality, the past comes back at once, with all its memories and with the inevitable thought of what might have been. And he was brave! Do you stop to think how brave, compared with your weakness?"

Her eyes sought his face again beseechingly but without sympathy.

"I have said that I could hate you, and I believe now that I do hate you. But when I spoke it was in the blind anger of the moment and in my sudden realization of what I had lost. Extraordinary and unusual as we find our situation, it isn't one that calls for anger. If ever there was a time we needed to be calm, it is this time, hard as it is to coldly dissect an affection. The horror of the affair to me is that I am the wife of a man who could compass such an infamy, and that there is but one alternative, if a common one, to overcome this bondage."

He moved nearer, saying quickly:

"An alternative? I did not think—surely you do not mean—?"

"Can't you realize," she interrupted, "that our lives together from this time would be unendurable to me? All that you ever won from me—my respect—you have lost. If I really cared deeply for you it might be, in the absurd sacrifices that spring from true affection, that we could go on

together, even rejoicing in what you had done. But this is impossible—you have wrought selfishly, building on an insecure basis. You have taken from me the greatest thing in the world. It is as if you had stolen something. What is it you ask of me? Consider: I am in what is called 'society,' in your sister's set—the sister who has made one of her issues in social warfare a new commandment against divorce. And we know she is entirely right—it is no longer fashionable, even, to divorce. I know how these matters go, know of women, and good women, too, who have lost all they prized in the shallow pretense of society through some false step, some unfortunate marriage alliance from which they seek relief by law. We may as well understand one thing, and that is that we are the creatures of a conventional aristocracy. I may as well admit that I stand in fear of scandal and gossip—what people will say. A woman has to think of that. I would not like to act precipitately, even if right. And yet I can see but one end to what may, at its lightest, be termed a *mésalliance*. Isn't it that, at least? You are not far removed from the criminal who acts more openly. You have forged not for mere wealth, but for all that is dear to a woman—and that is a greater crime."

Her arraignment stung him, the more so because it displayed intense conviction above its bitterness.

"You are speaking seriously, Mildred, of—of separation?"

"We must speak seriously, and plainly, of just that. Our lives must lie apart. This is not an abstract question. Together, I see only a routine that would be grotesque, even hideous. Is it too much for me to ask you to give me back that which you have robbed me of—my liberty?"

He walked slowly down the room, his head downcast and his hands twitching nervously behind his back.

"If it were possible, Mildred, I believe I would be willing to do what you ask. We have a different idea of punishment, you and me. And has

your—respect, as you say, so suddenly changed that you can see this in no other light?"

"I can only see a picture of suffering, that would be far worse than the alternative of which I have spoken. Some women can go about in the world, covering the scars and the pain, and smile in the recompense that comes with social life. I do not believe I am one of those women. I do not believe I can suffer in silence. Did you expect that?"

He went toward her again.

"I do not know quite what I expected. I only know that this secret has haunted me, and that it seemed I must tell you what I have told. I only speculated vaguely on consequences. And I feared—oh! it is so difficult to say what I feared, should you learn this secret through some confidence with Elbridge Brent. Even a hint from him, when you met, might have tumbled my house of cards. Can't you give me the credit, even so late as this, for shielding you from some impulse that might have followed the disclosure in this other way?"

"It is hard to tell what you mean by 'some impulse.' Your inference is not very creditable to me. It gives me the greater reason to despise you. You don't appear to realize that you are dealing in human emotions, and you are persistently selfish to the end. It seems to me you are in the position of one making a plea for mercy after having admitted guilt. Just now I can only see that you have wronged two people very deeply, and that you offer no restitution, but ask that I shall share in keeping from another a secret that is rightly his! What of him?"

Of the two, she was now plainly the stronger in self-control. It would have pleased him better had she continued as she began, in tears and anger and reproach. If he expected anything he expected an outburst against him, and would, possibly, have been better prepared to meet it. In this mood she was singularly calm, relentlessly destroying his pleadings as they were presented.

"Do you mean that he shall know?"

"He has as much right to know as I have."

Trenton sank helplessly into the chair before her. The strain of his days of self-torture, followed by the conclusion that he must make known his wrong-doing at whatever cost, had left him alternately hopeless and resolute. Ordinarily he was anything but a weak man. He had even summoned sufficient strength to meet the crisis of a confession, but now that he had met it he was unprepared to fight on. The energy seemed all to rest with her, and yet the knowledge that she was right gave him a sort of reckless desperation. He had certainly not looked for the immediate and convincing decision she had made. She had swept him from one stern reality to another, and made the end, not in the future, but in the present. His only thought was that time meant so much. If he could only delay, or at least minimize, the crash! And under all this was a sullen humor that he, too, had made some sort of a sacrifice that had gone unrecognized. In his uncertain state he could think of but one final effort to retard the unavoidable disaster.

"Mildred, this is a secret known now only to man and wife. Do you consider what may happen if it goes further?"

"You are illogical. What would have happened had it gone further, under the other accidental possibility you suggest? Frankly, what is it you fear? We have been plain enough so far; let us continue to speak frankly."

He held out his arms toward her.

"I fear—to lose you."

She ignored the gesture.

"That must be," she answered, "in any event. Let us not turn from the real issue of this matter."

He sighed and put his hands to his eyes, now overcome by the advantage she so persistently pressed.

"I know," he cried, bluntly; "you still love this man."

She rose, her cheeks crimsoned and her voice trembling.

"You return to that? And if I do? You have thought, in your selfishness, I would be your sole judge, a judge with the weakness of a woman and with a woman's sympathy even for such villainy. But there is someone else, and you must face him. You have wronged him, and you must atone to him by telling him the truth."

She passed swiftly down the room, her reserve quite broken by the sting of his words. He called after her weakly. At the door she paused and looked back at him.

"I shall ask him to come here," she said, "and shall expect you to remain and meet him. Either that, or I will go to him."

VIII

AN hour later Elbridge Brent called at the Trentons' in response to an urgent note from Mildred, sent to his club. Her appeal to him, after he had written that he would call that day, perplexed him not a little, and even though he was now replying to the request in person, it was not without certain misgivings. Being shown into the library, he made the third of a trio that met under the most extraordinary and serious conditions.

Although unknown to him up to that moment, the woman he had revered loved him now more than in all the past, and stood ready to welcome him as she would have welcomed him had he come to her alone, and at the end of the world. Between these two were now the barriers of a marriage vow and of his doubt. He had deferred this meeting, since his return, as something desired, yet dreaded. He did not deny to himself that he wanted to look again on this old love, notwithstanding all his sorrow and disappointment. The first bitterness had gone from him, and he was struggling with the unsatisfying, but perfectly evident, realization that his regard for Mildred Trenton was even now something more vivid than a mere memory.

There was no problem involved in

this—few men can tear out and wholly destroy a passion they have carried from the time their impressions were forming. If Brent had asked himself a certain question and truthfully answered it, he would have acknowledged a simple but unlovely fact—that at this moment he was in love with another man's wife. He did not ask the question, but when he came face to face with Mildred for the first time since their separation, as he did now, he realized well enough, even before she spoke, that the old affection was as strong as ever, and on the instant he regretted coming. The reawakening must be an element of danger to both. The manifest situation was that of a person making a call of convention and being confronted with the conclusion of a romance. Something in Mildred's manner, as she advanced to meet him, told him that her heart was the same. He recognized this with a wild throb that encompassed both joy and pain. He took the extended hand to find warmth and welcome, and, to his utter surprise, when he would have withdrawn from her clasp she drew her palm tighter about his. And thus they stood, he embarrassed and perplexed, she strangely determined, facing the husband.

Brent saw a man who appeared to have been broken and incapacitated through intense suffering. Yet the figure was a commanding one—broad and well knit, and suggestive of great power. But the grave, deeply lined face was sickly pale, and the eyelids had a hopeless, heavy droop, as if penciled by remorse. Brent had never met Trenton socially, and it was a peculiar trick of fate that he was about to be introduced to the worst side of his character, a character that was above reproach in the public regard. Mildred was the first to speak.

"Mr. Brent," she said, "this is my husband."

Elbridge would have gone forward to extend a greeting in the customary fashion, but his companion still held him closely.

"Before you take his hand I want you to be sure that you would care to do so," she went on. "Mr. Trenton has something to tell you; something that concerns us both very nearly; something that has been done."

Trenton looked agonizingly at his wife.

"Are you quite sure that it is just for you to persist in my humiliation?" he asked.

She released Brent and brought two chairs, which she placed side by side in front of her husband. Then she wheeled another to his side.

"If you choose to put it in that light, yes. You may spare yourself as you please, offering nothing in extenuation. I prefer that Mr. Brent shall be made acquainted with this affair as briefly as possible."

Trenton sank into the chair in hopeless weariness, and Brent took his place wonderingly beside Mildred. There was a pause, awkward for the newcomer, but reassuring to Trenton. Finally the lawyer began, dispiritedly, and in the low tones of one reciting a lesson.

"She is entirely right," he said, by way of preliminary. "You have no reason to take my hand. I am here as a self-confessed criminal—a forger and a destroyer of happiness. These are not pleasant expressions, but they fit the circumstance. I prefer to let you know that I understand them."

As he proceeded to unfold his story, and as, point by point, the mystery was made clear, Brent sat watching the man in fascinated wonder. At first it seemed impossible to comprehend what he was saying. Brent's impulse was to scoff at the absurd and cheap trickery of it; it didn't seem in place with the surroundings and the people most concerned—real people, he reflected, and not the personages of some fictitious world. He found himself wondering if he were really a part of it all and not the convenient victim of a romancist. When Trenton finished, which was shortly, for he had given no such detail as was offered his wife, Brent stared at him with no words to explain his amazement. He

knew vaguely that this man had injured him, and there was infinite solace in the discovery that Mildred had been true, after all. The pang of the disclosure lay in recognizing that the wrong was one to be not immediately remedied. And he knew that he had been cheated out of something that was of more importance to him than anything save life itself. He said only, when he did find voice to speak:

"It is very unusual, one would say impossible, in these days. Such things do not ordinarily come about."

He stopped uncertainly, looking at Mildred.

"He has spoiled our lives for us," she broke in, impulsively; "your life and mine. It is infamous; I have told him so——"

Brent calmed her by a gesture.

"That is true," he said, slowly, "but I do not forget that he sinned for love of you. It is not for me to judge that. It would be difficult to diagnose the temperament of a man who would risk what he has risked. Perhaps, loving you as I did, I, too, might have stooped—yes, even so low as this!"

She caught convulsively at the arms of the chair, saying, somewhat wonderingly:

"As you *did*?"

He rose.

"Certainly; as I did. You are this man's wife; I am merely an old friend. It comes to that, doesn't it? I am glad that this mystery has been cleared, and, after all, it was due to me that it should be cleared, since it would appear that I am one of the unfortunate victims of it. Of course, I shall respect the confidence."

He turned on Trenton, his hands clutching the back of the chair.

"I do not know what to say to you, Trenton," he went on. "Your duplicity is simply extraordinary. I don't know of any humiliation that you haven't earned, and that wouldn't please me to see overtake you. This thing you have done affected a very important part of my life, but worse than this, it has affected the life of a good woman. It would seem that the ordinary respect

you should entertain for any woman would have prevented you from going to such an extreme. But, as I have said, I cannot judge of your emotional vagaries. Aside from the peculiar features of this case, we find ourselves facing a common sense and conventional conclusion. You are a man of prominence and integrity, supposedly, in your walk in life, and have a reputation as an honorable citizen—I say 'reputation,' since, naturally, I do not now entertain any false idea of your character after what I have heard. Your wife is a woman of faultless family, with a position to maintain in what is called society. I assume that the social conventions—and even necessities—are such that it is possible for you to go along living with this skeleton between you, however disagreeable its presence. It is not the original skeleton, and has served in other families. Your confession was made through fear, and, after all, was prompted by self-interest. You knew you would be ultimately detected, and dreaded that the impulse following that detection would result in some scandalous act on the part of your wife. Ah—" for Trenton would have protested—"it is better to be plain, and it is useless to conceal this—you, who have reasoned this out so well, must have considered that point. And furthermore, you feared for yourself. You chose to arm yourself against any possibility of surprises by making absolute and complete confession. It was the only way, and it is the one creditable instinct you have shown. Your burden has been partially lifted, and the problem is on a debatable basis. But you still face the consequences of your act. It is now a question of what these consequences shall be. I do not know that I can solve it. It wouldn't do any good if someone killed you, or even thrashed you—this evil is beyond mere physical retaliation—and besides, the day for that sort of redress has gone by."

Trenton faced him with a display of a little more spirit in his attitude.

"You evade the one consequence, as you call it. She has forestalled you

in that." He paused, then finished sharply, as if the expression were unwelcome: "Mrs. Trenton has decided to leave me."

"Opening the way for what?" Brent turned to her. "Cannot you see what that would bring?"

"What else is to be done?" asked Mildred, going up to Brent and touching him with a half-caress. "He has become abhorrent to me—it is even beyond reason that we shall go on living this lie, Elbridge; you—I—"

He stopped her, half-fearful for her declaration.

"You have no right to say, at this time, what you were about to say."

He spoke again to the man.

"Your intimation refers to divorce, but you must have both reflected that, in these days, causes for divorce are variously viewed. The statements of fact in a divorce bill are not the statements accepted by the curious public, and a 'quiet process of law' is one of the mockeries of the time and the delight of scandal-mongers. A divorce is the concern of gossip and the misstatements of some irresponsible. It is not that the woman interested may be wholly blameless. She cannot divorce herself merely because you married her through a trick. People go into the past in cases like this, and it is not the past of the man that so particularly attracts them. The condition is that you are man and wife—mismatched, but still bound together."

Trenton regarded the speaker intently.

"I see now what you mean by gossip. You have certain qualms yourself, it would appear. You realize the inevitable introduction of your name in a cause for separation, and you fear it."

"Not, as you surmise, because it will injure me, but because it will injure her."

Trenton stepped nearer the other.

"In other words, people will look for the lover. Mr. Brent, do you still love Mildred?"

Brent's face was stern.

"I think you are seeking to drive me to some act of impulse that I may

afterward regret. This is no ordinary affair. It must be settled as logically as possible. I am going to make this secret known to a fourth person. After that I may want to talk with you further."

The woman broke in impatiently and angrily.

"You are both ungenerous," she declared. "I am the one that really suffers. You pretend that my good name must be guarded above all things, even at the sacrifice of my inclination, my happiness, my love. If it is a scandal you fear—if only a scandal will clear me in the end—I promise you I shall not hesitate to take the decisive step."

Brent caught her hands warningly.

"I am not forgetting you. But I must entreat you not to act precipitately. If you ever needed patience, you need it now. Do not ruin yourself by thoughtlessness, even in your hate. God knows, it would appear that there is occasion for anything!"

Trenton was insistent. A new spirit seemed to have come over him.

"Why do you prolong this by trying to delude me into the belief that you do not return the affection she has for you?"

Brent's face flamed with anger.

"You have gone quite far enough. If you think to simplify this matter at the saving of your own reputation—by believing that in some mad moment I am going to run away with your wife—you are mistaking me. We will not prolong this further. But I am very sure about what I shall do. When we leave sentiment aside we face one indisputable fact—a fact you have confessed to two people, and of which I have a silent witness against you. You are a forger and a criminal; not the divorce courts deal with people of your sort."

Trenton's face looked darker and more desperate than before. His wife, with her forced placidity and clearness of purpose, had confounded him. But here was a man, and the fact that this man had found himself in the peculiar position of defending another's wife and endeavoring to

conceal a passion that Trenton well knew existed, stirred a sort of rage in him.

"I do not think that threat will be found effective. It doesn't matter how I won my wife, in the eyes of the law, and this isn't the kind of forgery that classes me with—criminals, as you say." The word grated on him, and he finished wildly: "Even were all this so, it will go rather well among the gossipers you stand in such dread of to have it known that I am what you call me, and that her lover would instigate my prosecution."

Brent raised a hand to strike him, but mastered his impulse even before Mildred could rush between them. There was no mistaking, from the manner of her action, that John Trenton had by this time lost all he had counted on to save her to him. But Brent again entreated her to silence.

"After that," he said, quietly, "perhaps it may be as well that the whole truth is known, whatever the consequences. You are laboring under the excitement of desperation, Mr. Trenton, and you are not finishing nearly so consistently as you started. When you are calmer you will recognize your folly. We have been under a strain this afternoon and I think we can all do better by meeting after some reflection. You are a peculiar man, and a desperate one, but you are accustomed to think twice before acting."

He could not trust himself for more and, turning to Mildred, ignored the presence of the other.

"Mrs. Trenton, this is all so unfortunate, and has come so suddenly, that I do not think it would be wise for us to continue, in the present state of our feelings. There is just now nothing to be gained by it. We have provocation to do much that we might regret. I want to say one thing that occurs to me to be important—it is odd that I should have to offer you such words as these after our long separation and after the unusual way we have come together.

But I want you to remember that we are merely a part of a certain life—you more than myself. I utter no mere platitude when I ask you to think of the effect of this, not on ourselves, but on society. Society is a very serious feature of life, Mrs. Trenton, and its responsibilities cannot be ignored. It is not for us to say that these responsibilities have been evaded by others. This would not condone any offense against society on our part. It is to-day drawing closer into itself, just because it has been betrayed by the thoughtless and the impulsive. It is a very good world, this society, and a very desirable one to live in and be a part of. And it is important to balance its weight on either side in matters like these."

He walked toward the door, and she followed him despairingly.

"You," she began, uncertainly, "you—think of that above all other things?"

"I think that *you* should consider it above all other things."

"But I do not," she said, insistently, yet without distinct emotion. "I can only think that I—that we—have been cheated, and that some reparation is due."

In her eyes was an entreaty. The affected strength she had shown in the interview with her husband deserted her in his presence. It was as if she wanted to give up the fight for herself and trust to him to continue the battle. Even in this trying test, his reserve, although now well-nigh shaken, did not leave him. His look was full of kindness, sympathy, even love, and she detected this with a pulsating gladness. But he would not utter so much in words, and the momentary exchange went no further. He hurried out, Trenton following him to the door as if to reopen the controversy, and then, thinking better of it, turned off at the staircase.

As the two men passed out, Mildred took a wavering step or two, and then fell dazedly into a chair. She struggled, in bewildered amazement,

with the unnatural conditions confronting her. If, in her present weakness, tears would have come, she felt they would be a consolation. But her eyes were dry, and her mind was filled only with oppressive speculation. After a time she became conscious of voices in the hall, and insensibly shuddered as they penetrated her retreat. It seemed to her that she no longer desired either pity or confidence, and the thought of meeting anyone, even Camilla, unnerved her. She could just now see nothing before her but wretched, complete loneliness, and in the desolation of it she at last found relief in a sob.

At the hall door Brent ran awkwardly against a young woman who was coming in from the street. Her cheeks bore on them a scarlet health, and she laughed gaily at his embarrassment.

"Mr. Brent! So you have come to us at last? Mildred had given you up."

He was in no state of mind for an exchange of pleasantries with anyone.

"I am afraid Mrs. Trenton is not very well, Miss Traverton," he said. "You would better go to her, I think."

Her mood of merriment vanished.

"Mr. Brent, has—has anything happened?"

"Nothing serious, I trust; go to her. I am sure she needs someone—some woman."

He brushed past her almost rudely, and welcomed the freshness of the outer air.

IX

MR. THOMAS ILLINGTON, carefully arrayed for the afternoon, drove to his club, and there found a cable message awaiting him. When he read it he smiled and hummed a joyous fragment from a comic opera that associated itself with the occasion. Then he went to Mrs. Wheatley's, where he had understood Camilla would appear accidentally.

The occasion was musical, with a lecture by somebody and a famous

singer from the Metropolitan as the magnet. Mrs. Wheatley ran to this form of entertainment. She found it popular and safe, since she held a somewhat uncertain social position, and recognized the fact. She had come from Indiana two years before on the completion of the magnificent house given her by her husband as an incentive to a fashionable flight. Like many others who believe that they have in wealth the key that fits the lock of society, this estimable lady soon made the discovery that the door was bolted on the inside, while ringing the bell brought her only to the hallway. This discouraged her but briefly, although for a time she no doubt regretted Indianapolis. There was the house, and the Wheatley stocks and bonds were accumulating fast. She decided on a fight, not to harshly break into society, but, if possible, to gently lure it her way. Mrs. Wheatley had tact. She became an entertaining faddist. It got about that there were always odd, if thoroughly respectable, "goings-on" where she was concerned, and of late some of the best people had been lending a curiously indulgent atmosphere to her affairs. An entertaining bit of gossip was that Mrs. Wheatley was accomplishing her purpose *via* Europe, and that she employed an agent abroad who conferred, to some purpose, with illustrious creatures of genius who contemplated an American invasion. Nobody vouched for the truth of this, but there was something significant in the fact that the lady from Indiana was giving preliminary glimpses of celebrities with remarkable regularity. An English novelist of reputation had first been on view at Mrs. Wheatley's even before he lectured; and when a renowned virtuoso, over whom everybody was quite delirious, and who had previously declined all inducements to appear at houses, made his New York *entrée* through her music-room, people marveled how she did it. The whimsical patron of the arts was slyly ridiculed, but kept her own counsel, and was undoubtedly leading up to a *coup*.

Illington passed through a number of gorgeous apartments to find his way to the centre of interest. The music-room was a large, plain, cheerful apartment by contrast, and a scent of flowers permeated it. There were perhaps three hundred people here, and on the palm-surrounded platform a young man with a soulful face was concluding a brief address on "The Temperament of the Artistic Life." By consulting a programme of silk and gold, Illington discovered that this was a very famous young man indeed, "whose wide acquaintance with musicians made him thoroughly conversant with the subject treated." Nevertheless, he was pleased to think that he had missed the lecture.

There was some good-natured applause, with a rustle of polite appreciation, as this remarkable person concluded, and then everybody moved about and afforded Illington a chance to look up Camilla. In the course of his search he came across the sombre young woman who had interrupted a similar proceeding at Mrs. Menlo's. This afternoon she was conspicuous for a gown containing the gray effect that he associated with her personality. She gave him a grave greeting, and indicated a vacant seat beside her. He hesitated, but there was nothing else to do.

"I didn't suppose you were musical, Mr. Illington," she volunteered.

"Nevertheless, it is a matter for suspicion. Seriously, I am not. You see, I am merely an on-looker in New York this Winter, and I go where the attractions are. I understood Mrs. Wheatley usually offers something no person should fail to hear and see."

"She *is* odd," acknowledged the sombre young woman, "and her afternoons are so peculiar—one never knows quite what to expect."

"Does one ever know what to expect in society?"

"Oh, Mrs. Wheatley isn't really in society."

"She entertains it."

"Wouldn't it be better to say that she amuses it? There's no doubt of that. The poor woman tries very

hard. They call her the social thermometer."

"Because she is so easily consulted?"

"Dear, no; because one can never tell what she is going to do. There's a certain curiosity over her, of course, even though nobody has taken her up directly, and Mrs. Leicester wouldn't be seen on her premises. She's an example of one of those unfortunate women who suffer through her husband's commercial past and what is called the smartness of society. You see, when she came here everybody wanted to know if there was a Mr. Wheatley, and when it was found there was, it was natural to ask how he had made his money. That is one of the gross qualities of this life. Have you ever considered how society worries itself over somebody's method of getting money? It seems that Mr. Wheatley's method was mules."

"I thought the greater part of his fortune was the result of successful speculation in grain and stocks."

"That came afterward. What people most concern themselves over is the start of a fortune, and there's no denying the mules. When he was younger Mr. Wheatley secured an army contract to furnish a great number of mules. That, of course, was before he met Mrs. Wheatley, who, they say, made a very excellent quality of Indiana butter once on a time. Now, if Mr. Wheatley had simply consented to buy or lease or sell mules—or whatever it is they do with mules in the army—affairs might have turned out differently. Instead, he seems to have been rather proud of his business ability, and it got to be known that his mules were preferable to those furnished by other contractors. Some of the Union generals complained of the inferior beasts sent them, many of which died about as fast as they were received. They began to clamor for Wheatley's mules, and once, in a despatch to the commissary department, General Sherman referred to the subject, declaring that 'Wheatley's mules were the best.' Think of an histori-

cal drawback like that for a woman with social aspirations! There's no denying it, either, for it's in the Civil War records."

"But mules are perfectly necessary and legitimate."

"Perhaps so, in a war—not in society. It seems that there is always somebody at hand with a poor but popular sort of wit in cases like these, and shortly after Mrs. Wheatley set up in New York, and it became known how her husband started in life, Mrs. Dunnemore gave a house party, *en masque*. Do you know what that hideous Ferdie Acton did? He went dressed as a donkey."

"What admirable taste—for Ferdie!"

"You may be sure there was enough comment on the appropriateness of it, but that isn't the concern of anybody. He wore a label: 'W.'s mules are the best!' Everybody laughed—I thought it a little cheap in Ferdie—but you may be sure it didn't help Mrs. Wheatley any. If they had only stopped there! The thing got to be a standing joke, with Mrs. Wheatley utterly unconscious all the time. When she consulted Neddie Stockton once on some Shakespearean scenes, he promptly advised 'A Midsummer Night's Dream,' because, he said, Mr. Wheatley would no doubt find in it a congenial part. The poor soul, fortunately, did not see the point, and only remarked that Mr. Wheatley never acted."

"Poor Mrs. Wheatley! Of course, she doesn't know what people are saying."

"She doesn't even mistrust. It's rather nice, not knowing what people are saying, I find. It encourages one to believe they are not saying anything. . . . Mr. Illington!"

"I beg your pardon."

"Why are you always glancing about, when you are with me, as if you wanted to get away? You did it the other night at Mrs. Menlo's."

"I—I rather expected to meet someone here I know," he answered, hesitatingly, quite overcome at his want of diplomacy.

"Somebody in particular?"

"Oh, no, no—nobody of any consequence." He thought of the cable message and smiled. Then he said:

"Only my wife."

The sombre young woman was plainly startled.

"I didn't know—that is, I supposed—"

"That I was a bachelor? Well, at present I am. Perhaps I should have said my intended wife."

The sombre young woman showed a lively interest.

"How lovely! Who is she?"

"I can't tell you that just now."

"But if I see you with her I shall know; and perhaps," eagerly, "I might be of some use to you in searching her out if I knew her name."

"If you knew her name every woman in this room would also know it within a half-hour."

The sombre girl laughed.

"Of course they would—that's why I want to know. I haven't retailed a bit of fresh news in ever so long, and everybody is dying to know whom you came to New York to marry."

"So 'everybody' thinks I came here for the purpose of marrying, do they?"

"Surely. Mrs. Beach-Duff told me she was going to propose to you for her daughter Mabel if something didn't happen soon. She said it was too bad to keep you here spoiling. And she said you were old enough to know better—that at your time of life a man ought to have been divorced at least twice and become a widower once. Mrs. Beach-Duff never means anything she says."

"That relieves me. Do other people believe what she says?"

"Only when she talks about Mabel."

The sombre young woman, about to return to the previous subject, was compelled to stifle her curiosity for a time, since there was a swaying of forms in the assembly and a whisper, that started near the door and ran down the room. The event of the afternoon was at hand. The diva

moved gracefully between the little clearing of chairs in the centre and ascended the platform with a reassuring smile for the nervous pianist. Her journey had been accompanied by a general enthusiasm, which she acknowledged by an inclination of the head. She carried, loosely, a large number of roses, and when she sang it was over and through this cluster of loveliness. She gave a ballade, and afterward gracefully paid out her vocal riches in an aria. When she concluded, and came into the audience again, there was an immediate crush about her and a general tendency to offer compliments. These she received with a charming affectation of embarrassment, then passed out, leaving the guests to wonder, as was inevitable, how much she had cost Mrs. Wheatley, and to comment on her clothes and how perfectly natural she appeared "off the stage."

"She is our greatest singer," volunteered a mere creature of music, who was obviously blind to personal appearances.

"I have heard that her collection of jewels is superb," was the indulgent assent of her more practical companion.

"You should hear her in 'Aïda,'" persisted the creature of music.

"I have, I think; it is in that she wears that famous gown. Do you know if it is true that she is forty, and secretly married?"

"I do not know anything of her private life."

"So sensible, isn't it? I often think that the less we know about these people the better."

The sombre young woman resumed the attack on Illington.

"You are very ungallant not to seek out your lovely fiancée—for I am certain she is lovely. Don't fear to desert me; under the circumstances I don't mind at all. And you have made a very compromising confession, Mr. Illington."

"All confessions are compromising when made to a woman. Why mine particularly?"

"You have been indiscreet enough

to tell me that you were going to marry somebody, and have aroused my curiosity. Now I shall naturally exert my prerogative and come to a conclusion by naming her, since you won't. If I select the wrong person, and cause a row, you will be responsible."

"But you wouldn't do that."

"I am not so sure. The first woman I find you talking to will interest me greatly."

Her eyes twinkled merrily, and he wondered why he had called her sombre.

"How dense you men are!—of course I know who it is. Camilla Traverton is a nice girl. It isn't gossip to say that she has rather overdone a few seasons. Let me congratulate you."

Illington took the outstretched hand and gave it a confiding pressure.

"And do you know you behaved somewhat badly, sir? Why, the other evening you gave her a flower of mine—no woman likes to have that done. And just after I believed I had made an impression on you, too."

"You have made an impression. And you will tell everybody?"

"About the flower?"

"Certainly not; the other affair."

"Most decidedly. It shall be a very unpleasant afternoon for you, I promise."

So it proved. When he found Mrs. Escott, who was to have brought Camilla, that lady gave him the painful news that Miss Traverton had been unable to accompany her.

"Mrs. Trenton is under the weather—she seems to have been all upset lately. And I was to tell you particularly that you were to drive over this afternoon after the musical. If you are not going early I will put you down."

Mrs. Escott smiled knowingly.

"Camilla has told me something else," she said. "She is a dear girl, and I'm glad—sincerely glad."

Between Mrs. Escott and the sombre young woman Mrs. Wheatley found her afternoon enlivened by a most interesting bit of social informa-

tion, and one worthy of launching in more exclusive circles. This so encouraged the hostess that she at once determined on something extraordinary for a wedding present, and paid Illington a silent debt of gratitude for his presence. That something had been "heard at Mrs. Wheatley's" was an honor as yet undreamed of, and carried with it an unmistakable significance. She embarrassed Illington by offering her congratulations and by carefully conniving to keep him in the foreground as an altogether lovely, if unexpected blessing that had befallen her. From this trap he eventually escaped, with the aid of Stockton, who appeared at an opportune moment when he was surrounded by a quartet of duennas who had filed in from the music-room to inspect him. Stockton suggested withdrawing, an idea that struck a responsive chord, and they departed, somewhat guiltily, before the programme proceeded further.

In Stockton's carriage Illington was put through an interrogatory course.

"And will you tell me," asked the other, "why you should choose an afternoon affair of no importance to make public such an interesting matter as this?"

"I didn't choose it—Camilla has been telling her friends; therefore, it is no secret, and why not get it over with? Do you know a young woman who always dresses in gray?"

"I know thirty-five—they are nurses in a hospital."

"Oh, bother! This one has beautiful auburn hair, and goes about a great deal—it's singular, but I've been exceedingly confidential with that girl, and I don't even know her name."

"Naturally, then, she's the one you selected in telling of your engagement."

"Well—I did tell her of it. There isn't anything wrong about that."

"No," ironically; "it is customary to tell personal matters to strange young women in gray, with auburn hair. Has she gray eyes, and does she always wear an ugly little red

jewel of a bug somewhere on her—her corsage, if at a ball, or the neck of her gown, when her gown has a neck?"

Illington confirmed the description.

"Penelope Blair. I would marry that girl if it wasn't for one thing."

"What is that?"

"Her confounded objection to it. I wonder why women refuse to take me seriously? I proposed to Camilla Traverton any number of times. Now I'll be even with her; I told her I'd go to the altar with her in some capacity. May I ask if you have made any arrangements for your male accomplice in that proceeding?"

"Hardly; we cannot be married until Mr. Traverton comes back from Europe. I had a cable this afternoon with his blessing. He starts next week."

"I hereby make formal application for the position of leading support at the ceremony."

"Merely for revenge on Camilla?"

"Partly that, but mainly because Howard Demont is putting on rather too much in that respect."

"I will consider your application."

"Do. Did that gray girl speak of me?"

"No." Curiously: "Do you care for her?"

"I love her madly. I love every marriageable woman madly—it's something I cannot help. I think I have been in love with every woman in the younger set within the past five years, and have proposed to most of them. You've no comprehension of my persistency, and the best thing about persistency in cases like this is the sublime consolation that comes with rejection—the consolation of escape from perils somebody else will have to endure."

"Some day you are likely to be taken at your word."

"I do not think so. You see, the marriageable ones are coming to look on me as an agreeable and necessary early diversion. When I lay my heart at the feet of some innocent who has not yet undergone her first experience, I combine educational qualities with the added value of making her courage-

ous. I have discovered, however, that this comes naturally in most instances. I remember my conference with the Holland girl—she is now Mrs. Bob Wyking—on July 22, 1898. She was very young and just out, and I told her passionately of my regard for her. She was a sincere little thing who didn't care to hurt my feelings, at the outset, and murmured that she didn't know just what to say, and that it was a great honor and all that. I told her to say just what the others had—that I wasn't her Ideal; and do you know, she was so prompt in taking me at my word that she not only remarked I was not her Ideal, but somewhat unnecessarily added—'by considerable.' My most interesting adventure in this line, though, was on August 14, 1897, when I wanted to know of Virginia Ellert if she returned that deep and lasting affection I had for her. She replied that if my affection was really deep it ought to be deep enough to conceal; and if it was lasting, I could probably use it to the end of my days and avoid publicity. They all turn me off in some such way. I could have had Melida Coutell, but she had an unfortunate aversion to blue eyes, and said we should be quarreling constantly over them. That was on Christmas Day, last year."

Stockton leaned back on the cushions complacently.

"Your familiarity with dates attracts me," said his companion, amusedly. "I would suppose, considering your experience, you would become confused."

"Simply historical. Some great event is always happening or being celebrated on the days I make marriage proposals, thus fixing the time in my mind. The anniversary of the Battle of Waterloo, for instance, or the assassination of some Frenchman or other—they always mark a tender spot in my life connected with my rejection by some fair creature of society. My first experience with Camilla was on the memorable day General Shafter landed in Cuba."

They had arrived at the Trentons; where Stockton put Illington down

and drove off in silent meditation over battles he had not won.

X

CAMILLA came hurriedly into the receiving-room when Illington was announced. She was preëminently in what she called a "state of mind" and had been awaiting his arrival with agitated impatience. Ordinarily, Camilla was not an impulsive woman, and any deviation from the usual order of daily events in her walk of life did not disconcert her. She enjoyed the unexpected, declaring it to be an incentive to existence. But at the same time she disliked problems, and at present she was confronted with a problem. When Illington produced his cable message she gave a delighted little cry.

"From father?" Then, after she had read it: "I am glad he is coming so soon—it will seem a year, though, however quickly he comes. Such a miserable afternoon! Seriously, I do not see how I can stay in this weepy, horrible place any longer."

Camilla glanced nervously about the room and shivered, ever so slightly. "Sit down," she said. Then she perched on the arm of the great chair and idly ruffled his hair.

"Have you seen Mr. Brent?" she went on.

"Not since early to-day. Why?"

"You must see him—and as soon as possible. My dear, the most extraordinary things are going on. We might as well be in a story-paper as here, for the mystery of it. The other night I told you that I felt on the brink of a crisis, and now I am in the position of actually facing the chasm."

He gave her arm a reassuring pressure.

"The question is, how deep is the chasm?"

"I don't propose to be the one that jumps in to discover that, sir. This is not something to be lightly considered, I'm sure. Has Mr. Brent told you about Mildred?"

Illington grew serious.

"Yes, in a way. He was jilted. It's rather an unusual story, and he feels hurt. Has he been here?"

"To-day—for quite a time, I think." She nestled closer to him, pleased at the thought that she could confide in him utterly. "This morning I went out shopping, leaving Mildred and Jack in the library talking over something; and they were, as they have been for days, just about as gloomy and unsociable as two people could be. When I came back, two hours later, I met Mr. Brent in the hall. He seemed anxious to get away, and wasn't at all civil. I thought it strange, his being here, since Mildred had told me, only this morning, that he evidently didn't care to come, although she had invited him. His manner was most peculiar, and he told me that something was the matter with Mildred and rushed out. As I passed into the library I came across Jack, looking horribly white and distressed. He didn't speak to me, and soon afterward he, too, left the house.

"Mildred sat in a chair, crying. When I entreated her to tell me what was wrong, she declared that she was the most miserable woman in the world. She kept repeating this, rocking back and forth as if in the bitterest pain, and making irresponsible, fragmentary remarks about Jack. It was useless to attempt to reason with her. Presently she stopped crying and asked if her husband had gone. Then her mood changed, and she became furiously angry. All I could gather was that she had quarreled with Jack, and that Brent had something to do with it. Finally she went to her room and locked herself in. She has refused to see me again, but the last time I called at her door she told me not to make myself wretched on her account. This is all so unlike Mildred, who is ordinarily the gentlest creature, and I—I positively cannot understand the miserable behavior of everybody, just when I ought to be so happy."

She cried a little herself, out of sheer self-condolence.

"Has Jack returned?" asked Illington, reflectively.

"No, and I don't know what the servants are thinking, with both of them acting like lunatics. If it wasn't that I feared something—I don't know just what—I'd go over to Mrs. Escott's, as Mildred told me to do this morning. I'm sorry for Mildred, but I think it's only right she should let me know what has happened—it isn't fair in the least."

Illington stroked her hair caressingly and pondered over the perplexing conditions.

"It does seem extraordinary," he acknowledged. "I wonder what Brent said. He has been piqued, and he's all out with the world over Mildred's unkindness to him; but he's a gentleman, and wouldn't make a scene on his own account, you may be sure. I wonder——"

Camilla was calmer. She seemed to read his thought.

"That is just it," she said, quietly. "They are as much in love as ever, and in some way they have made Jack jealous. I wonder why two people, feeling like that, ever care to endanger themselves by meeting again, when they know perfectly well the uselessness of it. And think of the horror of Mrs. Leicester should anything go wrong!"

"It is the old, old tragedy of the heart, Camilla—let us hope it will not be acted out."

The case was baffling. Illington knew Brent too well to believe that he had been wilfully indiscreet. Something entirely beyond his limitations must have tempted him—something, indeed, beyond endurance. He recalled Trenton's strange action at the club when he had come suddenly upon Elbridge. But this connected with nothing that he knew.

"I wonder if Mildred would see me?" he began, and then answered himself: "No, probably not, in her present state. My way lies with Brent, as you have suggested. I will look him up at once."

He started up resolutely, looking affectionately down at Camilla.

"You poor girl!" he said. "All this is unjust to you. Were you going out to-night?"

"I can't very well now. I have been wondering if we ought to tell Mildred's mother."

"If the trouble is so deep as that Mildred will seek her herself; it is the natural thing. But wait until I have seen El—he must have something to say about this, and it might turn out badly if we are too precipitate. After all, it's their affair."

Camilla accompanied him to the door.

"Oh, dear," she said, "I feel as out of place as a cotillion favor, and about as useless. I hate mysteries—unless they're in a book and one can turn to page 351 and find out how they are going to end."

"I shall get page 351 for you as quickly as I can," asserted Illington, lightly; "but in the meantime, don't worry your little head too much over this extraordinary fiction, which may prove to have a humor we do not suspect."

Whereupon he made his adieu in the manner to which he was entitled, under the circumstances, and left her the happier for his coming.

But page 351 remained uncut for a time. In the first place, Illington was forced to seek a cab, a temper-consuming occupation. At his apartments all that Denners knew of Brent was that he had gone away early and had not returned to dress for dinner. He fumed about the place for an hour and at six o'clock departed again. Brent usually dined at a certain club, but to-night was absent and had been seen there but once that day. Illington, now in vast ill-humor, dined morosely and began to think. Earlier in the week Brent had spoken of some theatrical appointment. It was possible he would be found somewhere with Van Marse, who was about the only man, with the exception of himself, he had taken up since returning. Fortunately, there was a clue to this interesting *dilettante*, known to the clerk at the club. At eight o'clock Illing-

ton found himself journeying again—it had been a somewhat racking day of cabs and carriages for him—and half an hour later he found Van Marsen patronizingly listening to the newest comedy from a theatre box, which he was occupying alone.

Van Marsen declared that he had not seen Brent, but had made an appointment with him there—doubtless he would drop in during the evening. In absolute indecision over the next course in his search, Illington decided to remain for awhile, although he was in no mood for amusement, and found his thoughts wandering to Camilla. He found Van Marsen's chatter none too entertaining on this occasion, but listened to it absently.

"The average farce has no particular charm," his companion was saying, "even when personally vouched for by the manager who produces it. I think that Mr. Mansfield, trying to be serious, is far more illuminating in humor. The farces are running to bedroom scenes and hosiery, and remind one of a visit to the *modiste's*, although the models there are infinitely more attractive than their stage duplicates, and one doesn't find such a variety of cosmetic. And the only distinctive possession of the stage young woman is her cosmetic. Once, as an experiment, I kissed the feminine chorus of an opera company. It reminded me of a dinner I had in China—prolific in variety but indefinite in ingredients. . . . I don't care for young women in tights any more. They have ceased to astonish me. Doubtless they would cease to astonish us all before very long if they frankly and naturally did without them and got back to the first principles of undressing. Then, at least, our interest would go out and the *morale* of the stage would be restored.

. . . I often wonder what is the relation of the coryphée to the hereafter—there can be little that is alluring in it for her, if it is a mere matter of costume, since she is better supplied in her present existence. Fancy a chorus girl being asked to

don a white robe and comport herself with a golden harp! She would at once give the harp to the leader of the celestial orchestra and cry out for her Hindoo dancing costume and her inevitable cymbals. . . . In the comedy to-night we shall presently see the heroine disrobe and drink a cocktail. Everybody is here to see it. And yet, to-day, I saw an exhibition of chemises in the window of a store, and nobody stopped to look. There were cocktails, too, just across the street. . . . Every once in a while people will tell you that all this is degenerate. It isn't degenerate, merely dull. . . . There is vast concern over the future of the drama, an unnatural speculation which I solved long ago. It hasn't any future. The drama is simply like the stock market, always on the verge of collapse. The only question is of clever expedients in prolonging the conditions that lead up to the smash. . . . The most entertaining dramas to-day are played in the pulpits, for there the actors believe themselves sincere, and sincerity is always a good quality so long as you do not discover that it doesn't exist."

He prattled on until the curtain parted for the second act, and Illington wondered if the speaker seriously placed any value on his opinions. After the act, Brent not appearing, he made excuses to go away.

"If you must," acquiesced Van Marsen; "although I would like to give you my views on literature as a void, and I don't know where you could get any better entertainment. I appreciate a good listener, for I enjoy my own conversation so much more than that of others. I always agree with myself. Some men cannot even do that, and so they become theosophists—or is it politicians?"

Illington left him in bored contemplation of his program and made for a cab again, returning to the club. Here there was no news, and Illington resumed his quest by telephone, to the distress of the peace and quiet of the telephone boy assisting in that task. He demanded all places where

Brent was likely or likely not to be, and finally, the mystery deepening, he resolved to return to his own apartments and await Brent's coming, even to the dawn.

The hour was now eleven, and as Illington rode along he began to again consider Camilla's state of mind. He was tempted, more than once, to order the carriage driven to the Trentons', but the lateness of the hour and the fact that he had absolutely nothing to communicate deterred him. There was no necessity for arousing Camilla merely to tell her that the muddle was all the worse; he would go to her early in the morning and, as he hoped, relieve her of her immediate perplexities, at least. In the meantime, he was adding very materially to his own.

He had hoped, ever since he heard Brent's story, that it would be without a sequel, and yet, from the developments of the day, as he knew them fragmentarily, it was evident a sequel was forthcoming. He held himself partly responsible, since he had condoned—even advised—Brent's visit to Mildred. But it had been impossible to conceive that such a visit would be anything more than formal, for he knew Brent too well to believe that he would betray the old passion inopportunistically. It was equally impossible to reconcile any impulsive act on Mildred's part. Yet here was the incongruity of it—one or the other, possibly both, had made this improbable move. So much was apparent from what Camilla had learned.

In the confusing dilemma, which appeared to have no sensible solution, Illington was suddenly crossed by a thought that made him start and sit upright in the cab and to utter a quick exclamation of surprised alarm. His deductions, hitherto unsatisfactorily scattered, now marshaled themselves into one irresistible possibility: Brent and Trenton were both missing; there had no doubt been a quarrel over Mildred in the library, and Trenton had resorted to the only reasonable alternative—a challenge.

That these were not the days of duels did not affect Illington's belief that he had reached the solution of Brent's absence. He also remembered, clearly enough now, little traits in the character of both men that would render probable such an ending to a strenuous situation. Brent, calm enough and well able to control his emotions even under an excessive strain, was not to be entirely unshaken, as he had seen when the wanderer told him the story of his Western adventures. The visit to the Trentons had resulted in some wild impulse. As for Trenton, he had probably acted as a man of honor.

He had this new and amazing feature confronting him as a result of his solitary ride, and when he drew up in front of his quarters he alighted with some hesitancy. He did not at once dismiss the driver, as it occurred to him that, even this late, he might be impelled to continue his quest. In the vestibule leading from the main hall into his private apartments he found the faithful Denners, sitting expectantly beside the hat-rack. The servant wore an alert but troubled expression and appeared relieved to see him.

"Has Brent come in?" he asked.

"No, sir."

Illington gave him his hat and was about to move on.

"If you please, sir, there is a lady waiting to see you."

Illington elevated his eyebrows ever so slightly.

"Very well; did she give her name?"

"No, sir; she was very particular to say that it was important to see you to-night, and that nobody was to disturb her."

"Quite right, Denners. Nobody has disturbed her?"

"Mr. Stockton and the Duke of Ducketshire called and wanted to go in and mix a drink."

"And you stopped them?"

Denners bowed.

"Mr. Stockton was a little put out, sir, and said he would speak to you about what he called my imperti-

nence. I had to lock the door on the outside. I wish to say——"

"Never mind, Denners, you were in no way at fault. You are to remain here, and on no account let anybody in. Should Mr. Brent return, tell him to wait."

Denners produced the key from his shoe and Illington walked in, to find Camilla Traverton.

XI

SHE was sitting beside the table and in the dull red circle of the shaded light. As he entered she gave a glad little exclamation and started up. Illington stood in the centre of the room and eyed her severely.

"I must say, young woman——" he began, looking at the clock over the fireplace, with its incriminating declaration of a quarter past twelve.

"Don't say it's late," she interrupted. "Why, Mrs. Tendelen's cotillions rarely start until one in the morning, and if I intended going there, which I do not, I would be disagreeably early. Or is it because of the rendezvous that you were going to chide me?"

"I hadn't intended to chide, Camilla, only——"

"Only—bachelor apartments and a young unmarried lady with a reputation do not correspond with the hour? And what if it were a young married lady without a reputation? Very well, Tom, I think I can anticipate your little lecture. Don't suppose I'm here as the result of caprice or any undue curiosity to see what such a place looks like. For I'm quite certain——" glancing about her—"that it's the last little corner of the world I'd come into without a mission. I am very sure, too, that it is not a moral habitation—I have looked at your liquor bottles and your stock of cigarettes, and I fancy the punch-bowl is used overmuch for a young man professing sobriety, matrimony and the decorum of a Howells novel."

He laughed good-naturedly and brought a chair over to the fireplace,

so that he could sit facing her. And, although he had certain uneasy thoughts of after-opera visitors, he trusted implicitly in Denners and looked at Camilla with an air of proprietary interest. Even to her seriousness there was an undercurrent of humor, and he permitted her prelude of buoyancy to exhaust itself before they plunged into the subject of immediate importance—for he doubted not that her mission fully justified the somewhat extraordinary nature of her call.

"I say, Camilla, isn't it a little rough to come here as you have, destroy the effect of my moral lesson, and then criticise my hospitality?"

"Criticism is about all there is to hospitality. At some houses about the only interesting things one hears are the scandalous 'asides.' But frankly, Tom, I haven't dropped in here at midnight, in a stuffy cab and under the secrecy of a veil, as they do in the Grundy plays, merely to remind you that you won't be keeping bachelor quarters for long. First of all, then, why didn't you come back today?—it is immaterial that it was really yesterday, so you needn't quiz the clock."

"Because, my dear girl, I have been on one long, frantic pursuit of Elbridge Brent ever since I left you, and haven't found him yet. And it was so late when I gave him up that, unlike you, I couldn't risk a call at such an inopportune time. I didn't think it would be proper. But the world, I find, is varying its views of propriety."

"Don't get back to that," she retorted. "Then you have heard nothing?"

"Nothing—and you?"

She gave a comprehensive sweep of her arms, indicating a fund of information.

"As goes the declaration in the melodrama—I know all. I have known it for hours; almost ever since you left the house. I tore the veil from the mystery with one hand, and stood face to face with the chasm and the crisis."

Illington looked at her doubtfully.

"You couldn't have sent for me to tell me this, could you?"

"With the condition of affairs at the Trentons', and after what I've been through? My dear boy, if it's a question of propriety, that would be out of the reckoning. Do you know that I am at present deserted and wandering in the world, and that I am even now seeking some lowly roof—presumably Mrs. Escott's, if she'll take me in—in order that I may find shelter and peace? In fact, sir, I am just now a New York orphan, and, what is more, an engaged orphan. And yet my fiancé assumes to criticise me in my loneliness!"

He leaned forward, taking up one of her gloves that had fallen on her lap.

"Miss Traverton, I must ask you to be serious."

"Mr. Illington, I have spent a number of very serious hours since I left you this afternoon, and am entitled to what diversion I can find. I do this because it pleases me and makes you thoroughly uncomfortable. In the order of things, I should shriek and be tearful. I have done all that, and find relaxation absolutely necessary. Did you think Elbridge Brent and Jack Trenton were fighting a duel?"

Illington almost jumped from his chair. Camilla's unexpected invasion had temporarily obliterated this thought.

"How did you guess that?" he asked, quickly.

"Because I, too, guessed it. Trenton was gone so long, and you did not turn up to tell me anything about Brent, and—well, something came over me, something mysterious and uncanny. The lady that reads through the crystal ball would call it presentiment. Then there are mind-waves. At what hour and minute did this thought occur to you?"

Illington flung down the glove.

"Camilla, you are frivolous and exasperating. I have been worrying a great deal."

She returned his look in serene innocence.

"Everything in its order. Do you know, I rather fancy all this—being

where I shouldn't, and not knowing what is going to become of me next—and having a little puzzle all my own? Well, sir, what time?"

"Oh, I don't remember. It came over me, as you say, while I was riding here in the cab, just now."

Camilla sighed.

"Then it wasn't a thought-wave—I had hoped it would be that; so sentimental, considering our case. I came to *my* conclusion earlier. What did you do when you came to *your* conclusion?"

Illington tried to appear savage, and managed to appear ridiculous.

"I came home to think."

"And I *acted*—yet these are the creatures whose mentality we are asked to lean upon!"

In sheer despair he waited for her to proceed, saying, deliberately:

"Will—you—kindly—inform—me—if—one—or—both—of—these—gentlemen—met—death?"

She laughed outright.

"Bless you, no—the presentiment was as wrong as the thought-wave. There hasn't been a duel. But, as I said, everything in its order. At 8 p. m. that horrible possibility occurred to me. Thereafter I laid surmise aside and determined to know only the truth. I learned it by schedule. At 8.10 I rose in my wrath and my evening house-gown and demanded entrance of the weeping Mildred, who wasn't weeping, but was very emphatically calm and packing a telescope. Oh, think of it, a woman with a tragedy coming conventionally to a telescope! And at this point permit me to observe, Thomas Illington, that I experience a joyful relief at having done with that extraordinary young person. Of course, I am sorry for her, as one woman will be for another, but I owe her the grudge of nerves, and I can thank no woman for giving me nerves. She could have avoided much of it by coming to me in the first place, and I do not forgive that, either, knowing I'll have to get her out of the trouble in the end—as I shall, from my charitable inclination for other people's

business. Where was I? At 8.20 I had in my possession the facts in this romance of the past—very disagreeable facts, as you shall know presently. From then until 10 I was giving advice and endeavoring to use my incomparable tact. I may as well say that my advice was scorned and my tact made sport of. At 10.30 the unfortunate wife had taken her impossible romance and her telescope to the home of her complacent parent, with me in one corner of the carriage. At 11.55, by that clock, I stepped into this room, incidentally to tell you what I know, primarily to relieve my feelings. I had intended to simply call for you and ask you to drive with me to Mrs. Escott's, where I might lodge for the night, being a waif and homeless, but you were out, so I continued my exciting night's career by waiting for you, to see just what would happen next. Isn't it all delightfully clear?"

She concluded with an air of sober amusement suggestive of success in having perplexed him beyond her wildest hopes.

"So very clear, Camilla, that I marvel at your prodigality of detail. Mr. Barr, the novelist, couldn't tell more in less time. You are so fortunate in being able to make matters plain. And now, if I may ask, will you tell me just what it is all about?"

He made sudden prisoners of both her hands and pressed them as if he would scold her. She affected an indifferent pout, laughed a little, and then grew grave.

"Honestly, it isn't so much to make light of, Tom; but I am so tempted to tease you—and I cannot conform to the spirit of tragedy. No woman can—even Mildred, in her extremity this afternoon, broke off to ask me which dress she should wear. She would have thought of that if she was about to be led to the scaffold. The present situation is that the Trentons have parted, that Jack, and not Brent, is responsible for the whole insane affair, and that, while Mildred has conducted herself a little irrationally, she is right in the most of her conclusions.

After knowing of the incomprehensible and spectacularly wicked achievement of her husband, she was wrong in living in the same house with him the few hours that she did. The only difficulty now is the next step."

She detailed her interview with Mildred, who, it appeared, had concealed from her nothing of importance that bore on the troubles resulting from Elbridge Brent's return and her husband's confession. And the unfolding of the astonishing villainy of John Trenton had as much bewildered Camilla as it now, in turn, bewildered Illington. The listener in this case was not, however, a person so directly involved in the consequences of it. He could not, nor did he attempt to, conceal his surprise at the almost comical impossibility of it. Indeed, he received the extraordinary tale in much the same manner that Camilla had—with a doubt, at first, that it could be true. Trenton's act was to him, as it had at first been to all, beyond comprehension. And when Camilla concluded he acknowledged that he was confounded. Camilla listened with genuine satisfaction to his expressions along this line, with which she emphatically coincided.

"And do you think," she asked, "that with that on my mind I could retire to-night in the blissful conviction that this is a made-to-order existence?"

"I can see in you a victim of insomnia. But you spoke of Mildred leaving home—I can't see what is to be gained by that."

Camilla's pretty brow was drawn in a frown.

"There is nothing to be gained by it—it was rash and improper. But there is where the next step comes in, and where you and I advance to the centre of the stage in this excellent little drama contrived by the epistolary Mr. John Trenton. When I found Mildred packing, and sending Julie about on all sorts of queer errands, and when she told me of this, I sat down and, like the kind-hearted creature that I am, gave her the advice I am entitled to bore young

wives with—being myself practically in the important position of a world-wise spinster who has escaped the wiles of man. As well offer advice in English to your Chinese laundryman. I advanced all sorts of obstacles—chiefly social, largely Mrs. Williston Leicester. She met them all calmly and with one reply—life with John Trenton was impossible, and what had to come might as well come at once. You see, she had reasoned herself into one certain point of view, and that was that to reconcile herself to further existence with her husband was beyond further argument. I don't know, sincerely, that I blame her; he is not the man we all thought him yesterday. As for society—well, I'm afraid she isn't the first woman, nor the last, to snap her fingers at society."

"Which is a very simple yet serious thing to do."

"More serious than she at present realizes. After all, Tom, I am fond of Mildred—I know you are fond of Brent. Hasn't their story been sad enough not to add to the gloom of it? To-night, when Mildred went away, she was repentant enough over her temporary unkindness to me, and wanted me to go with her to her mother's. But after her hesitancy in confiding in me from the first, I felt a bit piqued—I wouldn't be a woman and feel otherwise. I bluntly told her that there were other places open to me, and that I wouldn't worry her any more; that doubtless it would be best for her to seek her salvation along her own lines. It was a little cruel, I know, but this is one of the cases in which even a forgiving woman must display some self-consideration—and I wanted her to think over my lesson. I am certain she will. If she believes I am ready to desert her so soon at the thought of scandal, what will she believe possible from her more conventional friends?"

"And you think a little more self-argument on her part will send her back to her husband?"

"No; whatever our own views, or

whatever the views of the Church on the sacredness of marriage, that, in this instance, is impossible and unnatural. Brent and Mildred are merely the victims of the selfish conspiracy of John Trenton, and are entitled to the happiness that has been denied them; it comes to that, however you approach it. With me, it is only a problem now of how to rationally bring them together."

Illington followed her rather stupidly.

"In which you seem to entirely obliterate the obstacle of John Trenton himself."

"And now," declared Camilla, rising to the accompaniment of a single chime from the clock, that made her turn toward that ornament with a pretty gesture of dismay, "we are just at the interesting point—how to obliterate John Trenton? I am not an extremist and would not, as you might suppose, recommend the cleanly destroying powers of nitroglycerine. And we may as well dismiss the question of the social ethics, since they arrive nowhere and only perplex. Simply, then, we are to concern ourselves with the warding off of any further disasters, bring certain people to their senses, and pave the way for a happy dénouement, even though it may be delayed."

Illington smiled feebly.

"I admire your enthusiasm, Camilla, but do not share in your confidence. Will you permit me to present a few obstacles in the way of your dénouement?"

She playfully turned up the red covering of the electric globe until the light struck the face of the clock.

"Willingly, but they must be brief—even I have compunctions about settling futures at one in the morning."

"First, there must be a divorce?"

"Splendid!"

"On what grounds?"

"John Trenton must discover that—he is a lawyer."

"But who will be the scapegoat?"

"Again, John Trenton—if necessary; there may be no need of one."

He can go away and allow Mildred to proceed properly and decorously."

"You might have some difficulty in convincing him of the beauties of that plan."

"I rather fancy that if he has the alternative of staying and allowing the real reason of his wife's desertion to be known, or to go, and have it kept a secret, he will not be hard to convince. It isn't nice to be considered a forger, either of a bank cheque or a woman's love-letter. In fact, society would think a little longer over the latter."

"Doubtless. Certainly you have logic, Camilla. Now we come to Elbridge Brent."

"He is just now superfluous, and worries me somewhat. I think he will have to go away, too—for a while, at least."

"And lastly, my fair Portia, the scandal."

"There we have a contrivance that pleases mightily the discerning young woman who stands meekly before you. There will be no material scandal—a little gossip and a paragraph or two in the society journals; nothing vulgar, nothing offensive. Mrs. Williston Leicester—you see that?"

She was drawing on her gloves, and held up the little finger of her right hand, which was the only one uncovered, and which he precipitately seized and kissed.

"Well, by to-morrow night, other things being equal, I shall wind Mrs. Williston Leicester helplessly around it. I only ask a fair field, one day, and no new perplexity, to close the incident of the unhappy wife, the good young man and the destroying husband. I also ask your aid."

He gave a bow of mock appreciation.

"And my clever social adjuster comes to that at last! A mere man is needed, after all."

She took up her wrap and acquiesced in his proffer of assistance.

"I have always held that man is a convenience, when he doesn't happen to be the third man and an inconvenience. I am not a perpetual

fount of wisdom, Thomas Illington, but when I do shoot forth I expect your admiration and not your sarcasm. I shall expect you to call for me, in a carriage, at Mrs. Escott's at ten to-morrow morning. And now—" She turned on him in childish despair. "I don't believe I told that cabman to wait."

"You forget," he said, laughing at her bewilderment and indicating the sideboard with a wave of the hand, "that men who do 'this sort of thing' always have a cab waiting at all hours of the night."

"Oh, yes," she averred; "for the moment I forgot I was out of civilization."

He opened the door and said something to Denners, who went away.

"I trust we can leave in safety," he remarked. "When I have time I shall lecture you on this. Suppose there had been an invasion, as is customary in this place!"

"Then you would have had to meet it single-handed and alone—there my adjustments would have been impossible of application."

They went swiftly down to the waiting cab, encountering only the circumspect Denners at the outer door.

"I don't half-fancy this, Camilla," he said, as they rolled Escott-ward. "What will Mrs. Escott say?"

"About what?"

"You, and this time of night."

She drew confidently closer to him.

"There's nothing awkward about it. I've been threatening to go there for two weeks. Besides, I often stop over after I've been out somewhere with her. It's one of the conveniences for me—a sort of social inn. Now, Mrs. Escott has surely been at the Campbell affair to-night and won't be more than getting home. And I—have been dining with my fiancé."

Which theorizing proved Camilla's cleverness, for the Escott house was lighted as the carriage drove up, and Illington was a witness to the abundant greeting of that good lady as he left Camilla at the door.

He rode back to his rooms in a state of half-amused bewilderment, easier

in his mind, in one important particular, yet not without additional mental dilemmas. He would like to know, for one thing, just what would be the result of Camilla's challenge to Mrs. Williston Leicester, and he wondered if John Trenton would be so easily manageable, under the circumstances, as this young woman believed. He took a reasonable and sympathetic pride in Camilla's desire, and even eagerness, to cope with a situation from which most women of his acquaintance would have shrunk, for through it all shone the light of what he considered a beautiful nature. And he was not the man to distrust the tact of Camilla when once she had determined on a course of action.

Dismissing Denners, he sat down to a cigar and a Scotch, humming a little tune as Camilla came into his thoughts, and ceasing abruptly as he wandered, somewhat anxiously, to Brent, although, from what he had learned, he could hardly believe any evil in that direction. And then he went ruminating on the very lively drama in which he had been moving since coming to New York—a drama that touched him but incidentally, perhaps, yet of which he seemed to be a part. His own wholesome little romance, interwoven with the extraordinary Trenton plot, appealed to him as a relief from the serious strain of the latter, and on the whole, he considered, the play was a bit more interesting than those he found at the theatres. He mused into an interesting state of indolence, in which he vaguely wondered how affairs were going to shape themselves—to the final conclusion that he didn't particularly care, that Camilla was the sweetest woman in the world, and that it would be best to go to bed and dream out the finale as he might. He had reached the half of his second cigar and his third Scotch, when this last lazy idea took the form of a determination, and he was about to act upon it when he heard Brent's familiar step in the vestibule. A moment later the missing man was present in the flesh. He came in with a matter-of-fact removal

of muffler and overcoat, and then appeared in the red light surrounding the stand.

Illington made a demonstration of interest.

"Well?"

Brent sank into a chair. He appeared to be physically shaken, and his eyes were spiritless.

"You are not aware, I suppose, that you have been a much sought man and that you have made half my day and most of my night one delirium of cab-rides and worry, to say nothing of Van Marsen's views on the drama and the possible blasting of a social career. Is this a fair return for the opportunities I offer for civilizing influences?"

Brent rapped nervously on the table with the knuckles of one hand.

"In any event, your day couldn't have been more delirious than mine, whether as regards cab rides, worry, Van Marsen or reputations." He glanced over at his companion. "I have that to tell you—"

"That passeth all understanding. I am more concerned over your immediate movements. Where have you been since you left the Trentons' to-day?"

"You know——?"

"I know the story I ought to have heard from you some hours ago—and something more. Again, where have you been?"

"Out in the country—thinking."

Illington took up his glass.

"Such an uplifting occupation—for the country." He drank his portion and resumed his cigar. "At one time I had an insane notion that you were in the country fighting."

"With Trenton?"

"Yes."

Brent laughed harshly.

"The man deserves assassination, not fair play. Do you know what they do with such cases in France? They leave the brute alone with a pistol, or a cup of poison, and trust to the little honor he may have left."

"In which case Trenton would feed the poison to the dog and effect his escape with the pistol." He went

over and put a friendly hand on Brent's shoulder. "Come, now, haven't you had enough of melodrama as it is? Your play isn't going to end that way—not half so easily. Twentieth century treachery may end in disgrace, but not in death."

"He has merited both," said the other, bitterly. Then, after a time: "Who told you about it?"

Illington hesitated.

"You may say Camilla, if you like."

Brent caught at his words eagerly.

"And Mildred—what did Camilla say of her?"

"I have learned that Mrs. Trenton is feeling better to-night—much better, in fact."

Brent stirred impatiently.

"Oh, she'll get through it—women do that, even if they have to be told at first what to do. Can you think of me as a saint?"

"Not in my present understanding of you," answered Illington, dryly.

"But I am. See here, when that man told of this I wanted to rush up and strangle him, and embrace Mildred, and——"

"Just as a saint would do."

"Don't laugh at me. Oh, you can't understand the fury of those first few minutes when the horror of the whole thing rushed over me. I thought of a thousand things, things that would have ordinarily been wild and improbable—that *were* wild and improbable. I never had murder in my heart till then; I didn't even understand its meaning, but all at once it grew upon me why men killed, why crime was possible. I couldn't trust myself to move or speak. And, do you know, I sat there driving back these thoughts until—until I found myself counting the ticking of the clock and wondering if it wasn't some uncanny dream."

Illington reached over and pressed the other man's hands into his own.

"And that great solemn fight, my friend, meant the honor of the woman you love."

Brent returned the sympathetic clasp, and in this quick appreciation

of friendship a silence fell on them.

"I have since wondered," said Brent, finally, "if it was worth while, after all."

"What we don't do in a crisis is very often worth while. For one thing, you haven't made an impetuous error, El, and isn't that so much credit to your good sense, not to say your conscience, that it is worth cherishing a little? And you have saved yourself and her for the more serious battle that is to come. That is worth more than all."

"I am not so sure there is anything to come."

"Anything? Everything. Do you know what I would advise? To trust in Mildred."

"Surely you know that would be a mistake. This is a bad business, Tom, and it mustn't be made worse; she cannot be allowed to ruin herself. Think of the dangers——"

"Of society? I have thought of them. Pretty much as you have, I fancy, during your thinking trip to the country. And so, I'll be bound, has Mildred by this time. Earlier tonight I don't know that I would have advised as I have; but a while ago I had some social theories rather thoroughly and neatly demolished. Besides, I have learned that in a game of cards one is quite likely to hold the points as well as his adversary. And a woman taught me that."

Brent started up excitedly and faced him.

"You have seen Mildred?"

"No, but I have seen a woman with more sense than either you or Mildred appears to possess at this instant, and who is enlisted in the cause. You will excuse me for being frank, Brent, but this isn't a case for hysteria, and that is what seems to prevail in you. I advise bed and a sound sleep. I have been through a great deal to-day, but I'm hanged if I'll act in a play that runs so late as two o'clock in the morning."

Brent stopped him entreatingly:

"But what of Mildred?"

"I don't know. I only know that she has left Trenton, but that it won't

turn out so confoundedly bad if she doesn't immediately do anything worse than that. She has gone to her mother's, as all heart-broken wives do."

He stepped up to Brent again.

"And I want you to promise me one thing—that you will not see her there nor do anything until Camilla Traverton either fails or succeeds in her little plan."

Brent was pacing the room.

"I may be a fool," he said, sharply, "but I'm not a blithering idiot. I don't see what Camilla expects to gain."

"She expects to gain for you what you have lost, and what you are entitled to—and to do it without that unpleasant attachment, a scandal. Isn't that enough? Let a clever woman have her way."

Brent paused irresolutely in his walk.

"I'm afraid I've got to the point where I don't trust in anybody."

"A very good point to arrive at, if you are a business man, but bad if you're dependent on friends. As for me, I'm willing to wait for to-morrow and the light, so good-night. I would like to wish you pleasant dreams."

XII

CAMILLA TRAVERTON, fresh from the placid land of forgetfulness, munched the toast brought her by the gray-and-white maid at Mrs. Escott's, and silently approved the night's restoration of her complexion, as evidenced by a survey of the looking-glass. She was not above wanting to look at her best, whatever the occasion, and she wondered if the others concerned in her little plan of campaign for the day were rising to a like appreciation of the advantage that comes with a serene repose and a mind capable of digesting new complexities. She lingered a little over her coffee to experience a doubt about this—in respect to Mildred, at least—and then fell to the more important speculation over the proceedings in prospect.

It seemed vastly important to Camilla to marshal her plans as consecutively as possible, for she was a practical person, and knew the value of time and the advantages of a starting point. So she first disposed of the immediate need, which was breakfast. The Escott breakfast, as she well knew, was a matter of ten o'clock, at which hour she would have something more interesting to concern her, yet she accounted a good foundation, even for emotions, a vital necessity. She rang for Janet and requested a less spiritual repast than was offered by the early toast and coffee, explaining, in the most matter-of-fact way, that she would go out before Mrs. Escott came down, and that her compliments and the assurance of her return were to be presented. The caprices of Camilla being known in the Escott household, it would not have mattered had she requested an afternoon banquet instead of merely breakfast. Wherefore, when Camilla set out, she felt fortified and substantial, and pleurably certain that there was something very beautiful and sustaining in the blessing of a good appetite.

The morning was crisp and bright, and as she swung along—for she scorned a carriage for so slight a walk—Camilla was a picture of health that Illington would have promptly fallen down and worshipped, even in the city highway, had he met her. When she reached Mrs. Porter's she ran lightly up the steps and astonished the servant by a demand for instant access to Mildred, even though he assured her elaborately that Mrs. Trenton was not visible at so extraordinary an hour. She passed on with a comprehensive "No?" and burst in upon Mildred's picturesque disorder, bringing with her the freshness of the morning and a suggestion in her spirits that the world was going very well indeed. She found the lady in the hands of her maid, but promptly took possession, sending Julie out of the room with a polite but firm intimation that there might be something to do elsewhere.

And then she placed a hand on each of Mildred's pale cheeks, planted a kiss and communicated a bit of color. The vigor of her personality stimulated the woman in the chair, who reached up and took her gloved hands in her own soft ones.

"You are a dear, Camilla, and yet I've been thinking of you as the first one to desert me. Not that I blame you, but I've had such a lot to think over and don't seem to arrive anywhere."

"That is your conscience, and I'm just mean enough to be glad it's troubling you, as I knew it would when you came to your senses, if you have come to your senses. But first, my dear, I must come straight to the point of my forgiving and sun-rising visit, for with Camilla Traverton stirring at the impossible hour of nine o'clock, you may be quite sure that there *is* a point. And I've a great deal to do, or, at least, think I have. Mildred, I want to know if you can truly and absolutely trust me. We will forget yesterday—a part of yesterday, at least—for I don't believe it was all conducive to the gaiety of either you or me. After all, when a woman goes through what you have, I don't know if it is the business of her next friend to complain of any slight. Of course, if I wasn't a foolishly friendly and charitable creature, as well as being about as curious as most any two of my sex, I wouldn't think of forgiving you. I should go right out to Mrs. Somebody's musical morning and start a twitter that would break into a chorus by the time it was heard at Mrs. Somebody Else's afternoon. I only want a slight return—"

Mrs. Trenton released her and got up to go hastily over to the bureau.

"If it's anything about going back, or any message from John, Camilla, don't say anything more—I wish you wouldn't bring it up. I know how sympathetic you are, and it's nice of you, but—well, I have decided."

Camilla's eyelids were cast down demurely.

"My sympathy is somewhat de-

pressing, I'll own," she declared, "but don't think I am here to inflict you with very much of it."

She walked over and put her arms around the other.

"You perplexing riddle!" she scolded; "it's to keep you from going back to John Trenton that I have lost two hours' sleep this morning—or, perhaps, I should say to keep John Trenton from you. Now, what had you proposed to do? Something beautifully indefinite, I'll warrant."

"I don't know, Camilla. I was just going to let matters take what course they would, I think."

"And a very bad course it would turn out to be, you may be assured. One of the difficulties of that sort of thing is that the course isn't always clear. It's like giving a horse his head. It may be a wild and reckless beast, and destitute of sense, with an absurd ambition to put its feet in the air and its rider on the roadway. No, my dear; don't make this a social runaway. All I'm going to ask you to do is to stay in the track and drive right along with the reins in your pretty fingers."

Mildred smiled.

"Camilla, you are getting horsey."

"No; only metaphorical. Will you ride that way, and sit up in the saddle?"

"I'm afraid I don't understand you?"

"Then we'll drop the horse business, for I can't afford to not be understood. Soberly, then, Mildred, will you consent to go on with some actual responsibilities in life and help me to fight down what—well, what may be said; instead of moping along under the shadow of a tragedy, with something worse to come? Oh, my dear! I so much want to help you, and you are threatening to go on so very badly—and I want to help you before it is too late."

Mildred wavered.

"It may be already too late. Besides, I haven't the heart for what you propose."

"You must find the heart. Cannot you and Brent wait a little?"

Surely you've waited long enough, as it is, to become accustomed to it."

"Camilla, you are coming right back to everything that upset me yesterday. You talk as if I intended doing something perfectly outrageous, and as for Elbridge Brent, it takes two to run away, if that is what you mean. I don't see why you bring him into it."

"Because we might as well understand that he has got to be brought into it, that he has been brought in—or why are you here?"

Mildred drew away from her.

"To escape the man I loathe."

"And does escape lie this way?"

Ah, Mildred, you can't deceive even yourself—you can't deny that you must, after all, demand the love that is still yours, and that is your right. But don't let it come to you tarnished."

She drew the other woman to the chair again and gently forced her to sit, while she leaned earnestly over her.

"Let me present the case as I see it, without further display of confusing conjectures. You are a young wife whose marriage, to put it conventionally, turns out disagreeably. You have taken the first step toward a natural and sensible separation, for the era of matrimonial martyrdom is past, whatever the views of Mrs. Williston Leicester and her worshippers. But, in doing so, you are allowing your judgment to go by the board, and are not particular whether you come out of the affair with a clean frock or not. In brief, you have come to the point where you don't care. Mildred, all I ask is for you to care. If it's a struggle, take it up for the peace that must come in the end."

Mildred looked thoughtfully at the carpet.

"I am not sure that anything can be done that I am not doing," she said, slowly. "I am not sure what John Trenton intends. You know there are really no grounds for divorce, Camilla, and I think he is in a frame of mind to make matters very disagreeable if he cares to. Even—

even what he did, despicable as it was, isn't an offense that would help me much if he was brought to task. People would talk all the same."

"But you can't go along, merely living apart, and with nothing for you to look forward to. You know that you and Elbridge must drift together. It can't be otherwise. It is one of the fateful things of the future—the future you seem to hold so regardlessly, yet which need not be painful if you will not have it so."

Mildred clasped her hands agitatedly.

"Just what is it you propose?"

"To get John Trenton out of the way and allow you to proceed properly; to stop all the talk I can—of course, there must be *some*—and finally to bring your romance back to the starting point. But I can't do it alone, with you merely letting affairs pass as they will. Mildred, I want you to cover up your wound for just one little year, and be the woman that you really are, down in your heart. At present you are simply a petulant child—and you are running into danger. Don't shut out the world, as you think you can; it will make the world all the harder, and perhaps, like the child, you will cry for it back, only to find that it keeps its gift. And as for society, the question shall not be what it may say, but can it say anything?"

The insistent pleading was bringing its reward, for Mildred Trenton sat for a time in thoughtful silence and then, with more command, stroked the gloved hand of her companion.

"You are right, my dear—oh, I cannot but recognize that. Only I am so miserably unnerved, and it would seem a grateful thing to let matters pass without a struggle. I am not the sort of woman to fight very hard, and there is only in me the bitter rebelliousness of having been uselessly wronged. I am not so sure that we can win."

Camilla shook her head playfully.

"Win? In the first engagement. We will win before nightfall. Just give me the support of your artillery

and the promise that you will go ahead where I leave off."

Mildred laughed slightly at her enthusiasm.

"At least, you are an encouraging general, Camilla—and I promise."

Camilla swung about her chair gleefully.

"Then the first engagement, which I shall direct alone, is against the combined forces of John Trenton and his sister."

Camilla looked up quickly.

"Mrs. Leicester will be the first to drop me."

"And the first to pick you up."

Mildred appeared doubtful.

"You are so certain you can assail society?"

"Absolutely. You would have merely given it a scandal—and a very poor, weak little scandal, let me tell you. I'll give it one and close its mouth at the same time. In fact, I shall circumvent it."

She made ready to go.

"I shall ask you to issue cards for an at home at your mother's. It is very necessary that you do something. Take your own day, Friday—it is merely a transfer in address—and be very careful, my dear, that your list includes only everybody who is somebody."

She gave her a spasmodic embrace and went breezily down and out into the street, pleasantly conscious of the success of her first plan and but slightly disturbed over what was to come. At Mrs. Escott's she waited for Illington, and as they rode bravely forth to Mrs. Williston Leicester's, she confided the result of her morning descent upon Mildred. From this she flitted to the more practical engagement to come, which, she declared, had terrible possibilities.

"For," she explained, "I do not fancy that Mrs. Leicester will approve my interference in what she will undoubtedly consider a purely family affair. And yet it is to keep it from being a family affair that I *must* interfere. Mrs. Leicester is not so dangerous, but she would do a deal of meddling, once she got into it, for she

has astonishing ideas of her capabilities for patching up domestic difficulties."

Illington appeared to be in some serious indecision himself.

"I'm afraid this is beyond patching, even with so good a social seamstress as Mrs. Leicester."

"The garment is torn quite in two," asserted Camilla; "and, singularly enough, it is a question of keeping it so."

"But I say, Camilla, are you not going into this business with a little too much confidence in yourself? I would like to know how you expect to explain to Mrs. Leicester that she is to keep out of it, as you say, and yet champion Mildred at the same time. And another thing, my dear girl. Will you charitably explain where I fit into your little plans, further than as a convenient carriage director and a companion for your confidences?"

She gave him an assuring pressure of the hand under the carriage robe—Camilla was not at all above such a display of perfectly crude sentimentality in a love affair.

"Confidence," she explained, "is merely a matter of a satisfactory breakfast and a becoming hat. I won't ask if my hat is on straight—I have confidence it is—but is it impressive?"

"I can't see the hat," declared Illington, looking straight into her eyes in a manner that made Camilla's cheeks more pronouncedly rosy.

"As for you," she went on, "you are a necessary convenience. Of course, I must have my pleasant call with Mrs. Leicester untroubled by the presence of sympathetic auditors. Which comes to the exact point where you are involved. When you set me down you are to drive at once to John Trenton's office—you know that even I cannot get over all New York in one morning, weighted down with responsibilities as I am—and bring him to his sister's. After that, you—wait."

"One would think I had become a super," complained Illington. "Presently I shall expect you to give me a spear, and tell me to walk three steps

to the right and call out something about the on-coming of the foe."

"And that is just about as far as your duties go, Thomas Illington. Only I shall expect you to be a good super and produce the enemy at the dramatic moment."

"And if I fail to find John Trenton?"

"You cannot fail. He is a victim of routine, whatever happens, and his routine is business at eleven o'clock in the morning. This is a matter of punctuality, as I think I ought to have impressed upon you by this time. You can reach John Trenton within fifteen minutes after I vanish into the Leicester portals and have him within those same portals within half an hour; but don't enter yourself. What is to come then concerns three of us."

Illington reflected.

"I am not sure that I can ride in a carriage with John Trenton for fifteen minutes without murdering him."

"I shall trust to your discretion—so don't produce him murdered. It would entirely upset my plans."

Illington again relapsed into doubt.

"You take a great many things for granted, Camilla, and you have what we call in the West a 'hustling' desire to relieve yourself of an emergency about as soon as it presents itself. Have you made sure your schemes will not miscarry?"

"Can one be sure of anything? I am not infallible; but I have a reasonable sense of security. Who was the very wise man, in the Book of Quotations, who declared that we were not to make certain rules on the contingency of human actions? I can only anticipate what is likely to happen, and prepare for any emergencies. At the children's party the other day the mother of little Lexington Warriner appeared in the midst of the gaiety to ask, in the most commonplace way, if that cherub had yet fallen down stairs. She was only curious, she said, in order that we might have the arnica ready. Now, Lexington Warriner hadn't fallen down stairs, but he did so very effectively, comprehensively and noisily ten minutes

later, and the arnica came in handy. You see, Mrs. Warriner was a woman of perspicacity. She made her rule on a contingency, and to some purpose."

Illington smiled.

"And this illustrates your problem?"

"To anyone who is not dense. Mrs. Warriner had even less responsibility than I have. I have faced a number of contingencies. With all Mildred's leaving home, and wanting affairs to go on as they would, I saw that she would inevitably turn to Brent and that he would come to her—it is not always wise to count on smothered emotion. The result would have been a tumble down the staircase of society, to the hurt of both and with no thought of the arnica. In this event, when the scandalous accident became known, John Trenton would appear in the light of the much-suffering husband, and even the publicity given his forgery would not soften the sentiment against the offenders. Society would merely observe that it came rather late in the day. The next staircase presents John Trenton at the top of it, and in his descent—which I assure you must come—it is necessary to alarm his sister. John Trenton's exposure must come, therefore, as a threat, to force him to seek any way he may out of this that will not reflect either upon his wife or Mrs. Leicester. We have faced the contingency of Mildred and Brent. I am solicitous over Trenton only in one respect—he may have already confided in his sister, although it does not yet appear why he should do so."

She settled back in the seat.

"On these matters, Thomas Illington, I claim only the credit of Mrs. Warriner's common sense on the arnica question. They are not matters to be settled a week hence, nor even to-morrow. They are to be dealt with to-day, now, even if they do make me appear to be a shining illustration of your Western idiom."

The carriage was drawing up at Mrs. Leicester's. Illington got out

and, as he assisted Camilla, he said:

"Young woman, you are the most resourceful creature in the world—and you shall have John Trenton if I have to bind him and drag him here."

She waved him a smiling farewell and went buoyantly up the steps.

XIII

IN Mrs. Williston Leicester's set moved a select and limited number of people who had been remarked upon as "the Howling Exclusives." The diversions of this set were directed by Mrs. Leicester herself, and in the clashes with other cliques the guiding mind of this lady was found to be vigorous and resourceful. For some years she had emerged triumphant from quarrels that had set society on edge in divisions and redivisions. This social genius was now a woman of forty-five. She came of an irreproachable family. In the society prisms it was never discoverable that she gave "large affairs," and she was the implacable foe of social fads. She particularly deprecated the modern tendency to hold lightly the marriage vow; and such was her influence that at one time she practically ostracized a woman of apparently safer social position than herself. This had been a brilliant and astonishing battle, and, while the other side did not go down to utter defeat, the result was so greatly in favor of Mrs. Leicester that her set became as a rock against which the outcasts and envious ones might hurl their slings of sarcasm with no more effect than if they had been putty balls. She represented the extreme of the moral element of society, and her following was necessarily dull and stupid, to a great degree, yet the locked gates were ever being beaten upon in supplication for admittance to the interior paradise.

Mrs. Leicester appreciated the power and force of a minority when that minority was banded closely and was really, or successfully assumed to be, superior. Some of her set went in other sets, but not promiscuously,

and Mrs. Leicester herself—never. The most desirable way to the heights lay through her—a fact that even her enemies recognized; while her displeasure often meant the end of an ambitious career. It is perhaps well to mention that she did not ordinarily exert this displeasure, being far too diplomatic to make unnecessary foes. Her concern was not so much who got out of society as who got into it. She had used her oblivion-consigning power just rarely enough to make it recognized as effective. And it was naturally to Mrs. Leicester that the thoughts of Mildred, Brent, Camilla and Illington had flown even in the midst of the extraordinary whirlpool of personal sentiment into which they had been swept by Trenton's original sin. For to each of them this woman represented the censor of society, and their lives lay very near. Since her marriage Mildred had been one of the connecting wheels of the Leicester set, although one of the youngest of the matrons to be received therein. The predominant reason for this was that Mrs. Leicester was the sister of John Trenton. Mildred moved elsewhere as she would, but always under the benign glory of having free access to the holy of holies.

Mrs. Leicester had long idolized her brother and held ambitions for him, largely political. At this time the lawyer seemed in a way to realize some of these, for his prominence as the legal adviser to certain influential concerns and persons identified with political affairs, and his own personality—which was viewed generally as being agreeably strong—combined to force him into a place in the public eye of which he was not loath to take advantage. That Mrs. Leicester let slip no possible social chance to assist these ambitions was a matter of current observation, and if she had silently deplored his match with Mildred Porter, when he might have made a more brilliant one, she had openly accepted his choice with the utmost graciousness.

Camilla entered into the presence of Mrs. Williston Leicester with an

abundance of spirits and with the satisfactory realization that her self-possession had not deserted her. Her unusual call, she explained, was one of great urgency, and the mission one that she would personally prefer not to engage upon, since it related, at best, to a business that was not directly her own. She was speaking, in fact, for a very dear friend—the wife, indeed, of Mrs. Leicester's brother.

Whereupon Mrs. Leicester, who had kept Camilla waiting for ten minutes as a polite inference that her visit was ill-timed, raised her expressive eyebrows, and her visitor faced the climax rather more quickly than she had expected to.

"Mildred," Camilla went on, somewhat exasperated by the eyebrows and the delay, "is wholly unfit to come, but I think, when the circumstances are explained, you will agree with my advice to her that no time was to be lost in communicating with you. May I ask if you have seen Mr. Trenton since yesterday?"

Mrs. Leicester was but indifferently interested.

"No. You mean that Mildred is not well? Perhaps it would be better for me to run in upon her."

"Mrs. Trenton," answered Camilla, suavely, "is not at present at her—at Mr. Trenton's. It is of that I come to ask your counsel—I may say, assistance. The story is somewhat peculiar and out of the common, and, as I have said, I find myself embarrassed at being its bearer, but the exigencies of the occasion demand it."

"I fear, Camilla, that you do not make yourself quite clear."

Camilla hesitated. She was blessed with a conscience, and even an inferential falsehood troubled her. Then she decided that she might reasonably excuse her fiction, on the plea of unusual necessity.

"I would prefer—that is, I had hoped—that Mr. Trenton had made you acquainted with the matter." She had hoped nothing of the sort, but this seemed necessary in leading to her next declaration.

"In doubt as to that, and his presence being important, in any event, I have requested him to come here to verify what I have to say. Perhaps, then, it is as well that we do not delay."

Whereupon, without additional preliminary, and yet with covert concealment of outright cruelty, Camilla explained the flight of Mildred and the causes leading thereto. Mrs. Leicester interrupted but twice, and when the story was finished promptly avowed that it was all utterly impossible, and not to be thought of in connection with a Trenton, particularly John. In deference to which opinion Camilla declared that she would await the arrival of that person, and in the interval relapsed into polite commonplaces that slowly urged Mrs. Leicester on to distraction. And while John Trenton did not appear at the expected "dramatic moment," as Camilla had wished, he finally did appear, to confront a very calm and deliberate diplomat in Miss Traverton, and an irresolute and agitated woman in his sister.

Camilla was womanly enough to experience a feeling of consideration and pity for this man, and she quickly noted that he seemed to be aging in years with the mere passing of hours, but she did not permit this sympathy to interfere with the more serious task upon which she had entered. She came at once to the reason for her visit, with brief reference to Mildred's flight to her mother's and Mrs. Leicester's doubt over her explanation for it. And with this, John Trenton found it necessary to confirm to his sister his part in beginning the tragedy that had wrecked his domestic life. It was to his credit, perhaps, that he did so without an attempt at self-exculpation; that he simply acknowledged a condition and was willing to face it. As to Camilla's position as arbiter he held a different view.

"May I ask," he inquired, coldly, "why you did not bring my wife with you, Camilla, in an affair that more nearly concerns her?"

"My dear Jack, we may as well

understand that this is no longer a matter to be settled between Mildred and yourself. After what has passed I do not think she cares to prolong her misery by undergoing another interview with you. I am very well aware of her sentiments, and I may say that they have not quite the charitable color that mine have."

"My sister——"

"Your sister cannot effect even so much as a truce. I tell you that this one condition must be accepted as a settled fact. Mildred is entirely beyond the point of what you might term a reconciliation. It has come—I don't like to say it, but if you knew Mildred as I do, you would realize that there is no alternative—to a plain question of divorce."

She looked quickly at Mrs. Leicester, who appeared to be stunned by the news of the extraordinary events. Her brother's confession was quite beyond her grasping. Not only had she been betrayed in an idealization, but she saw crumbling before her the social monument she had so carefully built. And to Mrs. Leicester it would be hard to say which was the more appalling.

She winced at the word that was under her social ban, and would have spoken, but Camilla proceeded:

"It seems to me that it comes to the matter of procedure. An absence of sensation would, I think, be agreeable to all concerned."

Her eyes were again upon Mrs. Leicester. Trenton, who had been seated, rose quickly.

"Camilla, how far has this thing been spread? I suppose you have not wasted your time since Mildred told you?"

"If I were to lose my temper, Jack Trenton, which, as you know, I am not likely to do, I would say that this thing ought to have been spread about as far as geography reaches. But, to keep to the facts, I will say that, besides the four most concerned, it is known only to Mr. Illington and myself. It was very natural that I should tell Mr. Illington, whose promised wife I am, the reason I

was summarily turned out of the house of my—protectors."

Trenton felt that he was at a disadvantage. Mrs. Leicester was a picture of helplessness, but with a rising dislike for this dictatorial young person.

"Still," insisted the man, "I do not see why this isn't an affair that would be better discussed with my wife rather than an intermediary."

Camilla was threateningly near the danger line, but checked her impulse.

"That would be a very pretty arrangement, but it lacks the important feature of the lady's compliance. It isn't pleasant to say it—indeed, there are a great many unpleasant remarks necessary here, it seems to me—but your wife is just now 'not at home' to you in more than the conventional use of the phrase. I am afraid, Jack, that you will have to accept the intermediary, for these preliminaries, at least. And if Mildred does see you again, I am certain that the result of the interview would be for her to carry into effect the plan she had in mind all along, and from which I am attempting to dissuade her, particularly if you attempted to bargain with her as you are doing with me."

Mrs. Leicester came a short way out of the fog of bewilderment and looked curiously at her visitor.

"What plan do you refer to as Mrs. Trenton's?" she asked.

"There is a very nasty—would I better say discreditable?—bit of business back of this whole unfortunate circumstance. I refer to Mr. Trenton's—forgery."

Camilla paused significantly, to allow the arrow to find its mark.

"In the new issues, we are forgetting the cause of it all. It isn't—" turning to Trenton—"as much a matter of separating two people, as you did, but how you accomplished it. To be sure, as a penman you went no further than to intervene in a love affair, but I think if Mildred makes this public, as she threatens, the effect on your reputation will be anything but pleasant."

She paused, but neither of her lis-

teners spoke. Her conscience was again in evidence, but this time she smothered it without excuse.

"And I am quite sure that the acquaintances of Mrs. Leicester will hardly maintain that her brother's course has been altogether admirable. We are again confronting that perplexing question, 'What will people say?' A woman who is the victim of a forger is likely to enlist a large amount of sympathy, but it is unlikely that any sympathy will be wasted on the forger himself. People will talk, and they will say that a man who would do this might be mistrusted along other lines. And the reputation of not only himself, but of his family, would, to say the least, suffer."

Mrs. Leicester had social diplomacy at her fingers' ends; she had made and marred social careers by her mastery of this art. Yet here she was confronted by a diplomacy that overwhelmed her. For the first time in her life she was at the mercy of a woman. She started to protest, but was stopped by a gesture from her brother.

"For heaven's sake, Camilla, don't bring my sister into this!"

"And had you supposed that would not follow?"

Trenton was pressing his hands open and shut. He asked, quietly:

"What is it, then, Mildred asks me to do?"

"I don't think she asks anything, but in the case of a superfluous husband, would it not be wise for him to do the graceful thing and drop out of existence—for the good of all concerned—temporarily, at least? He would then protect the name of somebody dear to him, and as well provide his wife a basis for—legal procedure."

Trenton looked at his sister.

"Mildred desires, above all, to maintain her position in society?"

"Not 'above all.' I think she wishes to have society at her disposal if she considers it important to her. She does not wish to be made a victim of its gossip and innuendo."

Mrs. Leicester chafed under her self-restraint.

"You are so absolutely sure, then, that you and Mildred are in a position to dictate terms, as you are doing?"

Camilla displayed no temper.

"That is unlovely of you, Mrs. Leicester; but if it is a matter of dictation, I will say that we are reasonably sure."

"You know, of course," Trenton resumed, "that I could fight this in whatever way it was presented—that the introduction of another name, even by inference, would hurt her socially more than myself?"

"This is simply a barter in reputation. You have been indiscreet to put the matter in such a light, for I do not seriously believe that you contemplate anything of the sort. And you are hardly entitled to introduce that other name. Mildred is well aware that you can assail her. But on that point I must ask you to again consider your sister and what would be the effect on the Trenton escutcheon when the discovery came about that it is not—well, what it appears to be. Is it wise to return to that?"

Mrs. Leicester hurried to her brother's side. She was more than ever overwhelmed.

"I spoke hastily," he admitted.

"You must remember, Camilla, that I have passed through some trying scenes. It has not been pleasant to tell what I have had to tell my wife and my sister. There is nothing cheerful in the confession of wrongdoing."

"We will not, then, deviate from the situation as it confronts us. I think Mildred would be agreeable to your abandonment, if it can be accomplished without any serious reflection on her. You are a lawyer—there must be some other public reason for this separation than the real one. That the cause must reflect on you is, of course, necessary. You may go about it as quietly as you will—that does not trouble her."

He reflected, finding himself in the altogether unusual predicament of a

lawyer consulting himself as client, but the humor of it was apparent only to Camilla.

"It is true that we cannot live together, but that is hardly the purpose of a divorce—we have had no family disagreements up to now. I have been loyal as a husband, she as a wife. The world goes deeper in its search for a motive. It is, in these times, hardly possible for two people to ask to be permitted to go their ways merely because one tires of the other. Frankly, I see no other way than that you have suggested; to, in effect, desert her, and make no defense. And in a legal sense Mildred has proceeded rather more wisely than you have given her credit for in taking the first step. She has made a cause, as it is. Your idea is that I shall not embarrass that cause by remaining here?"

Camilla acquiesced. She wondered why John Trenton had been so slow to discover that this was just her idea.

"As for what people may think or say, the problem we seem to be constantly getting back to——"

Camilla interrupted:

"I am prepared for that, and that is in reality the cause of my call here. Mrs. Leicester will, I apprehend, acknowledge to her friends that Mrs. Trenton is in no way wrong, that her conduct has been exemplary and that of an honorable wife; even to the further and necessary acknowledgment that, dear as her brother is to her, he was plainly in error on all facts for which Mrs. Trenton shall seek the redress of separation. After all, society doesn't think very long over these affairs, when it finds that scandal is not to be permitted and is not tolerated by its leaders. Am I not right, Mrs. Leicester?"

Trenton raised his hands entreatingly.

"Camilla, I beg of you do not distress her because of what I have done."

"I am sorry if I have done that. This is a painful but necessary thing that I do. I do not want any misunderstanding, on Mildred's account. You do not seem to comprehend that

Mildred is a very great sufferer herself, and has the most to lose. It has hardly been a trivial circumstance, and even the present solution is not altogether reassuring."

She turned to Mrs. Leicester.

"Mrs. Trenton will need your help. Perhaps my solicitation of it implies a threat, but, somehow, since I know the conflict Mildred has undergone, and know that there is but one end to this, sentiment is not a part of the adjustment. On this, you can come to a better understanding with Mrs. Trenton herself when you call, as I trust you will lose no time in doing."

Mrs. Leicester's placidity was partially restored.

"I shall certainly call on Mrs. Trenton—if I can convince her——"

Camilla discreetly interposed.

"You cannot convince her that she has not moved according to the dictates of her heart. I hoped I had made that clear. Let us avoid more discussion on that point. Mildred may count on your social assistance? This is more important."

Mrs. Leicester regarded her helplessly. Then the conventions of society came to her rescue, although the admission cost her more than she would have cared to acknowledge.

"I will be happy to assist Mrs. Trenton in any way that I may."

Camilla was pulling on her gloves, and gave her a look of gratitude.

"So very kind of you, Mrs. Leicester. Mildred is receiving with her mother on Friday—it will be so pleasant to have you there."

Trenton had gone over to the window, to where Camilla now followed him and laid a sympathetic hand on his arm.

"Jack," she said, "both you and Mildred have been very kind to me—I cannot forget how kind; but this is a very horrible thing you have done, and so unlike the Jack I knew that I find it hard to understand you. You couldn't expect it to end in any other way. I may not appear very admirable in the eyes of your sister, but Mildred must be protected—as much against herself as anything."

He was hopelessly sad, but not indifferent.

"You have been right, Camilla. I realize that it would only add to Mildred's distress to argue this over with her. I have foreseen it, but it is hard—so hard—to give her up."

"It would be far worse to fight against giving her up and lose even your own respect and mine—for you have mine, Jack; and if you have been dishonorable—it's horrid to say that, but I've been plain—you are making amends. For a time I saw no end to this hopeless tangle, and it isn't a very good end, as it is; but I think we have saved Mildred without the expense of harming—your sister. I want to thank you."

He took the hand she offered and pressed it in silence. She bowed to Mrs. Leicester and withdrew.

"You played your part very well," said Camilla to Illington, as they drove back to Mrs. Escott's. "There was some delay, but the day was saved. And what a saint of patience you are!"

"And your part, Camilla? How have you played that?"

"A little irrationally, I fear," sighed Camilla, "and there's more to come. But the strain is over. I don't know when I've been so busy since I served punch at a church bazaar."

Which was only one of Camilla's absurd similes.

XIV

A FEW days later Mr. Thomas Illington, having disposed of the mail that had arrived at his club that morning—conspicuous in which was a little tinted note of a few lines, which he lingered over rather fondly—picked up a leading society journal and found therein three items that interested him. They read as follows:

The sudden departure for South America of Mr. John Trenton, the well-known corporation lawyer, who has also of late assumed some political prominence, carries with it a significance that is much

discussed in society. Mrs. Trenton, who was Mildred Porter, was a bride of but a few months, and it is remarked that the husband will not be accompanied by his wife, although his absence is understood to be for a long and, in fact, indefinite period. Indeed, it is no secret that this unusually sudden separation is due to domestic infelicity that arose in the honeymoon of this interesting couple, and that Mr. Trenton's absence will politely pave the way for certain legal steps on some common ground. Mrs. Trenton, it is understood, is shortly to take up her residence at her mother's country house on the old New Hampshire homestead, and it is further remarked that the divorce laws of that State are hardly so strict as those of New York. The domestic division of the Trentons seems to be wholly a matter of temperament, and that the wife is clearly in the right would appear from the fact that Mrs. Williston Leicester, a sister of Mr. Trenton, has set her approval on the proceeding, notwithstanding her well-known views on the subject of divorce. She has, in fact, taken the young wife quite into her keeping, and is giving a small affair in her honor on Monday next. Mr. Trenton is said to be a man of violent temper in private life, something very well understood by his socially prominent sister, who did not view his marriage with pleasure, largely on account of her regard for the young woman concerned. The connection of Mrs. Trenton's name with a former attachment does not seem to be warranted, and has been dismissed by society in general, since the man concerned, who is no longer a resident of New York, although at present here on a visit, has quite forsworn his former companions, and has not been seen at all in society.

The engagement of Mr. Thomas Illington and Miss Camilla Traverton, daughter of Colonel Henderson Traverton, is announced, although the date of the ceremony is indefinite, owing to the absence in Europe of Colonel Traverton and his sister. Miss Traverton is a young woman of considerable freedom and an engaging personality, whose heart was supposed to be impregnable to a sentimental assault. Mr. Illington, now of Chicago, has lately come into prominence as a railroad promoter in the West, and is said to have amassed a fortune through his own efforts. He is a son of the late Bayard Illington, at one time prominent in the city, but whose death found the family affairs greatly involved. Young Illington gave up his social career to go West.

Mr. Elbridge Brent, the somewhat astonishing gentleman who returned from the dead and a series of Western adventures a short time ago, has gone back to his ranch in Arizona, where it is said he enjoys existence more than he does the delights of New York club life. His career has been peculiarly romantic, and his strange resuscitation in society is said to have caused some complication in the family fortunes, since they have had to be readjusted. Many people have lived to read their obituaries, but not under similar circumstances, and one of Mr. Brent's ill-fated companions in the Colorado River expedition has at least been highly honored in the matter of a funeral. Friends of "El" Brent had hoped he would remain in New York, but society has held little to attract him, and it is not altogether unlikely that some Arizona belle—I am assured that there are belles even in Arizona—may know the secret of his determination to leave New York.

Illington laid aside the print and mused. Under the circumstances Camilla appeared to have reasoned very well in her estimation of society, although he wondered if some people would not connect at least two of these items. The circumvention of outright scandal was undoubtedly a triumph for Camilla, but he grew to

speculating on the future, and asking himself if it would be so easily accounted for. Mildred and Elbridge had not written finis to their story, although time might do wonders. He recalled Brent's words to him, following a final interview with Mildred:

"It is hard to go away, but she is right. And when one has waited, as I have, a little more waiting may be accomplished in patience. After all, woman contrives rather better than man, I think. This is an affair of conventional respectability, and perhaps we are to congratulate ourselves on what didn't happen when there was so much more that might have happened. It is a peculiar old world, but I cannot say that I have found it dull—and there is something to look for hereafter."

This was brave enough, in the abstract, but what of the hereafter?

Illington sighed, then took up the tinted note again and considered that it was as well not to concern himself with the future of others when his own was of particular moment.

Whereupon he went to pay his respects to Camilla.



A QUALIFIED COMMANDMENT

"**E**R—H'M!—Now, bruddren an' sistahs, an' mo' specially de bruddren," parenthetically remarked the Reverend Washington Wooltop, after giving out the text on a recent Sabbath morning, "a thought occurs to me at dis junction, dat perhaps I ort to be a little mo' microscopical right at de induction ob my specifications, an' say dat dar am times an' occasions when eben de most sonorous proverbs an' alliterations should be follered wid incrimination an' what am vulgarly known as hoss-sense."

"My taixt, dis mawnin', am 'Lub yo' enemies,' but I wants to sternly an' salaciously indemnify dat dar ain' nothin' in dat avocation to warrant yo' all—an', mo' tragically, de brudders, as I done predicated befo'—in twistin' an' scrutinizin' de adjunct into a hallucination dat, b'cuz dat 'ar pusillanimous an' invulnerable nigger gin am yo' enemy, yo' is in any way advocated to lub it to de extent ob drinkin' it. An', wid dese few words ob preambulation, I will now pursued wid my reg'lar dislocation."

TOM P. MORGAN.

A MAN'S IDEAL

A LOVELY little keeper of the home
Absorbed in menu books; yet erudite
When I need counsel. Quick at repartee,
And slow to anger. Modest as a flower,
Yet scintillant and radiant as a star.
Unmercenary in her mould of mind,
While opulent and dainty in her tastes.
A nature generous and free, albeit
The incarnation of economy.
She must be chaste as proud Diana was,
Yet warm as Venus. To all others cold
As some white glacier glittering in the sun;
To me as ardent as the sensuous rose
That yields its sweetness to the burrowing bee.
All ignorant of evil in the world
And innocent as any cloistered nun,
Yet wise as Phryne in the arts of love
When I come thirsting to her nectared lips.
Clothed to the pretty lobe of her pink ears
For other eyes away; for mine alone
The feast of sculptured throat and breasts of snow
Gleaming through billows of seductive lace.
Good as the best—and tempting as the worst—
A saint, a siren, and a paradox.

ELLA WHEELER WILCOX.



BEYOND RECALL

"I REGRET to say, madam, that your little son betrays every symptom
of degeneration."
"But, doctor, is there no hope for him?"
"I fear not. I understand that he has read every book in his Sunday-
school library."



A SOCIAL NOTE

MISS MENTAL PABULUM, of Boston, who is an enthusiastic yachts-
woman, has given orders that, during the ensuing yachting season,
the crew of her yacht, the *Trigonometry*, should refer to "a spanking breeze"
as "a maternal zephyr."

AN EASTER EPISODE

THEY left the church together and came down the Avenue. The Easter sun gave a more roseate hue to her pink roses and varnished his smoothness. She was *chic* and picturesque and Parisian. He was tall and polished and altogether correct. They were apparently on the best of terms.

"You see," said the high hat, "I knew you almost at once. Of course, I was a bit bewildered—you were wearing wings last Easter, you remember."

The bonnet sighed.

"I did hope to be taken for a *débutante*," she said. "It's not kind of you to remind me that this is my second season. I trust I carry this trimming well?"

"That shade of hair suits you excellently," said the hat. "Confidentially, I've been in the world long enough myself to be a competent judge. To be blocked seems only to refresh one's memory."

"You must have met so many bonnets in your time," she murmured, "that you are over-critical—"

"Not one I have been taken off to to-day," said the hat, gallantly, "can be compared to you. I admired you very much when we first met last Easter. You have no idea how much I missed you when you—er—retired in the Fall."

"And that odious astrakhan affair took my place," said the bonnet. "I used to think of your being together—one has so much time to think in a handbox," she sighed. "I hope she will be moth-eaten before Fall!"

The bonnet nodded at a passing couple. "Pardon me," said the hat, as he was lifted. "A nuisance, isn't it?" he complained. "That's the worst of church. First one is set upside down in the dust under a pew

and afterward, on the Avenue, one is kept perpetually moving."

"Hat-pins!" complained the bonnet. "Those are the things I detest. One is tearing my straw now. I can feel it! If this keeps on the cook will be wearing me before August."

"You would prefer an elastic?" suggested the hat.

"Horrors, no!" cried the bonnet. "I would die of mortification. I would rather be torn to pieces!"

"Ah, that's the bonnet of it," observed the hat, loftily.

A voice came from beneath the hat. "Perhaps I shouldn't have spoken here," it said, "but you look so adorable this morning—and you *will* let me come to-night, and you will *tell* me?"

The voice fell into a whisper. A timid murmur from beneath the bonnet answered it.

"Ah," said the hat, knowingly, "I fancy I'll hang in your hall this evening."

"It's my doing," said the bonnet, proudly. "When I saw myself in the glass this morning I knew I couldn't be resisted."

Presently the hat sighed. "Here is where we part," he said.

The door opened. For a moment the bonnet and the hat came so close together that the pink roses blushed to red and trembled on their wires.

"Until next Sunday," mourned the bonnet, as the hat went down the steps.

"Until then," said the hat, gallantly, "I will be upon the rack."

As he was borne briskly up the Avenue, he chuckled. "Really, now, I wonder if she saw the joke," he thought. "These bonnets have so small a sense of humor."

MC CREA PICKERING.

THE TOILET OF VENUS

By Edgar Saltus

BRUMMEL liked his smartness unperfumed. "The linen of a man of fashion smells, sir," said he, "but of the open." The remark, a paradox then, has become a platitude since. As with men of fashion, so with women. Cologne water has been abandoned to ladies' maids and extracts double-distilled to shop-girls. To-day the most modish perfume is health. The next best is a suspicion of orris. Occasionally one encounters a suggestion of lilacs that are far away. The further away the better. In smart life these represent the gamut. Anything more florid jars. In Brummel's day and during its many morrows the use which fine people made of patchouli was nothing less than dissolute. They had a love for millefleurs which we can only qualify as depraved. The epoch has gone, thank fortune, and may it never return. It was a matter of taste, no doubt, but it was all so bad. The further back memory wanders the worse it gets.

Consider the lilies of the field! There is a spectacle simple and sedate. Its elements do not figure in the perfumery of Judæa. Said Solomon, "My beloved is unto me as a cluster of camphire in the vineyards of Engedi." A cluster being insufficient, he added a mountain of myrrh, a hill of frankincense, an orchard of pomegranates, spikenard and saffron, calamus and cinnamon. The beloved became a conservatory—sultry, sticky and soporific at that, and yet, we assume, entirely symbolic. Even so, the beloved was alluring beside the vision which Muhammad evoked.

Hell is certainly paved with women's tongues. But Paradise, as mapped in the Koran, is floored with musk. It

is with musk that houris are garmented. That, however unnatural, is natural enough. Muhammad, afflicted with *hysteria muscularis*—the only disease, parenthetically, which ever founded a religion—intercepted in his hallucinatory trances and afterward detained, reminiscences of anterior worship. In days when the world went slower the young altars of the old gods were splendid with aromatics. At the shrines of long ago, in the temples of Bel, in the crypts of Memphis, in the sanctuaries of Jerusalem, everything sacred was scented. Perfumes, it was believed, not merely pleased the gods; it was believed that they were tokens of their presence. Witness Aphrodite. However humid her breast may be with the salt of the sea, always she brings with her a whiff of ambrosia. So it was with Isis. The atmosphere in which she dwelt was charged by her divinity with fragrance. In appealing to her, perfume and prayer mounted conjointly, and the more readily because of the conjunction.

The circumstance is worth noting. It elucidates obscurities of Muhammad, of Solomon, too, and helps to an understanding of the real significance of perfumes. But we will come to that in a minute. Meanwhile we may offer a conundrum—What were the charms of Circe? Ovid told, but his work, like many another, was turned into palimpsests. There let it rest. We have something as good. It is a treatise by Apollonius, an historian of whom we know so little that it is idle to attempt to know less. Yet what we don't know of him he knew of Circe. The witcheries of the wicked enchantress were entirely apothecary. It was the old lady's

habit to apply to each part of the body a different variety of unguent. The effect, novel in itself, delighted Ulysses, and, surviving the years, became fashionable in less legendary life.

Smart Athenians perfumed the hair with marjoram and the brows with an essence of apples. The arms were rubbed with mint, the knees with ground ivy. Baccaris, an extract of crocus, was put on the soles of the feet and rhubarb on the fingers. They used these things, others as well. They painted the face with white lead, the lips with alkanet, the eyelids with kohl and the nails with henna. The recipes, regarded as common property, were inscribed on marble in the temples of Æsculapius. The custom is citable. Fine folk wished not merely to look fine; they wished everybody to look fine, also.

The wish was not limited to them. It preoccupied the legislature.

At that time a woman who presumed to be out of the fashion, whose peplon, for instance, did not hang right in the back, or whose general appearance was not modish, there and then became a disturber of the peace, and as such liable to a fine, which varied, with degrees of slatternliness, from ten to a thousand drachmæ. Those, indeed, were the good old days.

There were others, however, particularly in Rome, where individual smartness was loved as never before and, except sporadically, as never since. Perfumes there were not limited to the person. The tunics of men of fashion were elaborately scented. So, also, were their baths, their beds, their horses, their dogs and the walls of their houses. Melinum was one of the odors most in favor. Made of quinces, it came in three forms—liquid, solid and powdered. There were yet richer perfumes. One much affected in high life consisted of twenty-seven ingredients, and cost, in our money, about a hundred dollars a pound. Nothing earthly would induce us to have a grain of it about us.

Another scent was saffron. As an essence it streamed through entertainments. At dinners where guests lay, fanned by boys whose curly hair they used for napkins, a preparation of it was found serviceable in neutralizing the fumes of wine. Perfumes then offered possibilities in debauches, in cruelty, too, with which, unhappily, we are unacquainted. Caligula spent a fortune on unguents. He waded in them. Such was the joy of Nero at the death of his wife that he had more incense burned than Arabia could reproduce in a decade. Helio-gabalus asked a lot of people to dinner, and from panels in the ceiling had such masses of aromatics fall on them that before they could escape they were smothered. We are not making this up. The carouse is down in Lampridius. It is true, he may have invented it; but that we doubt. Lampridius was not imaginative, and Helio-gabalus was. That painted boy who looked like a dissolute girl, and who, to the Romans, contrived to be both emperor and empress, had perfumes that were poisons. He got them from the curious East, whence he came.

The odor of one of them perverted the imagination, stained the thoughts and depraved the mind. It turned conceptions of wrong into right and made the unholy adorable. It set men mad and made women hide themselves in the Tiber. It smelt as purple looks. In certain seraglios and ceremonies of the Orient it is rumored to be detectable still. But we must not believe everything we hear. In any event, it is not used on Fifth avenue. That, though, is a detail. The point is that there never was a place so scented as the splendid city of the Cæsars. Not merely did men, women and animals come in for their share, but the victorious standards of the victorious legions, which dripped with blood, dripped, too, with perfume. The purple sails of the jeweled galleys were perfumed. In the colossal delight of the amphitheatre, where, beneath a canopy of spangled silk, a thousand musicians answered the roar

of beasts and the cries of the multitude with the kiss of flutes, the hum of harps and the blare of brass, at stated intervals there rained from the terraces showers of saffron, of cinnamon and myrrh. Those, too, may be catalogued among the good old days.

It was during them that Venus managed to be, it not at her best, not quite at her worst. In years subsequent and sedater her toilet became more substantial, yet we entertain a suspicion that what it gained in texture it lost in grace. The perfumes that she trailed through Rome were not lasting. They faded with the click-clack of her sandals. It took the Moors to detain them. The Moors invented a number of things—how to whip Spain, how to make rhymes, how to play checkers, how to give serenades, how to do algebra, how to set clocks and how to extract and preserve perfumes by means of distillation.

The process was performed with an alembic, which means a still. But that bit of erudition need not alarm. It has a false air of learning which is not in our line. We have no pedantic familiarity with this subject or, for that matter, with any other. We are able, at most, to recall that perfumery, as understood to-day, began just about then, and that the fragrance of it was first noticed when Salahaddin flooded the floor of Omar's mosque with rosewater.

The odor passed with the Crusaders through Europe. Its vogue was immediate. Venus promptly utilized it in her finger-bowl, where it must have been serviceable, for the fork had not yet come, and when it did was regarded as a piece of great foppery. But that, too, has a false air of learning which we despise. In order that we may not seem to know more than we do, we will just note that so grew the daintiness of the lady that presently she had perfumed gloves, perfumed candles, perfumed bellows, perfumed pillows, and with them, we take it, perfumed dreams. If the latter resembled the rest of her *batterie de cuisine*, they must have been nasty

enough. They must have been heavy, cloying and bitterly sweet. Perfumery she had, but not perfumes. Even so, she was better off than she had been for a long time past.

In those dismal ages society stank vilely. The very select used balsams instead of baths. The less select used neither. In "Much Ado About Nothing," *Pedro* says of *Benedick*: "Nay, he rubs himself with civet." And the deduction follows: "The sweet youth's in love."

This, of course, occurred in days semi-fabulous and wholly barbaric. In a later and more neighborly epoch taste ran to what was called the essence pot—"amber, musk and bergamot, eau de chypre, eau de luce, sanspareil and citron juice." The taste became a subject of legislation. A trifle over a century ago an Act of Parliament declared that "all women, of whatever age, rank, profession or degree, that shall impose, seduce and betray into matrimony any of His Majesty's subjects by the use of paint, false hair, false teeth, iron stays, bolstered hips or scents, shall incur the penalty of the law in force against witchcraft and like misdemeanors, and the marriage, upon conviction, shall stand null and void."

And quite right, too. Divorce we have always regarded as the mother-in-law of invention, and we can imagine no better ground for separation than the use of scents. Beside them iron stays and bolstered hips are charming. In the hair of the Beloved—not Solomon's, but ours—there is a fetching freshness. We like it best when blown by the wind of the ocean. The smell on her of brine and of seaweed is more captious to us than was musk to Muhammad. When from the woodlands she returns, her frock redolent of the breath of brooks, of the odor of acorns, and the clean, cool smell of undergrass grown overgreen, we could sit down and write—and even stand up and dictate—a sonnet.

The smoke of the small black shavings that come, or are supposed to come, from the *Vuelta Abajo*, endears

her to us also. A pretty mouth seems to us a pretty place for a cigarette. The use of it by no means betokens the fast woman. Fast women try so hard to appear respectable that they would not smell of tobacco for a farm. It is a mistaken idea to the contrary which preserves middle-class femininity from its lure. We hope this paper will not enlighten them. We are not here to educate their taste. To pass from them to the Beloved; most does she imparadise the heart when on the saddle she has managed to accumulate the emanations of the fields and hedges over which she has shot. Beside her, then, a nosegay of the essences that bloom on Bond street seem cheap and meretricious. On such occasions she suggests nothing so much as a human flower—a jasmine in flesh and blood.

That is what we call perfume in its perfection. It has but one higher stage. Before entering it a prelude may be of use.

There are a baker's dozen of problems all of which look very simple, and which it is conveniently supposed were solved long ago. So they were. But the solutions have not a leg to stand on. For instance, there is the toilet of Venus. Ask any scientist why it is that with every evocation of the goddess come gusts of ambrosia, and if you pin him down he will give it up. Scholars are readier. They can cite Homer. But Homer is descriptive, not explanatory. Yet for every effect there is a cause. This is not an exception. Solomon intercepted it. So, too, did Muhammad. We who are less agile know Elysium, Heaven and Paradise to be the same place with a different name. Ideas of it vary with peoples and prophets. But though creeds confuse, though they change, too, as climates do, there is one conception common to all. It is that humanity has fallen from a higher estate and that ideals are but reminiscences of what we once beheld when we were other than what we are.

Assuming the conception to be correct, we enter with it into a more intimate understanding of the toilet of

Venus than science and scholarship have been able to provide. For with it, hand in hand, comes a clue to the problem of perfumes. However much the latter may be out of fashion now, they have their reason and their rhyme. Everything has. The purpose of centipedes and critics is not entirely clear. The purpose of jellyfish and bores is not obvious, either. But they were not put here without an object. As with them, so with the rose. Its patent of nobility is to be useless. It charms, indeed, but it seems to have no other scheme of existence. In the lap of nature it lolls, lovely and enigmatic. But Solomon, who was a seer, and Muhammad, who was a medium, divined its meaning. Their joint love of perfume was due to an intuition that in the ethereal hereafter it is on the odors of flowers that spirits subsist.

It is for this reason that the young altars of the old gods were splendid with aromatics. It is for this reason that everything sacred was scented. It is for this reason, because, like ideals, perfumes are reminiscences of the divine. In an ancient geography it is written that beyond Astomia dwell beings who live on the scent of the rose. Astomia should not be confounded with the Astoria. Beyond it means beyond the tomb. Even so, the customs of the next world are not suited to the Waldorf. When society was more primitive, and consequently nearer its anterior state, perfumes, however pungent, were permissible, and, for that matter, praiseworthy, too. To-day the Beloved no longer suggests a cluster of camphire. From Aphrodite, as she deigns to appear to us, every trace of ambrosia has gone. She smells of fresh cambric and fresh air. She is pretty as a peach and, parenthetically, just about as witty, but she doesn't go to the apothecary for unguents now. She perfumes herself with health, occasionally with virtue. She leaves essences to maids, extracts to shop-ladies, and, unless she had a dictionary handy, she could not spell patchouli to save her life.

So do customs change, fashions, too, and with them the Toilet of Venus.

AN EASTER SOLILOQUY

By Albert Bigelow Paine

SCENE: *Church of Benediction—
Easter morning—holy air.*

*Enter
Miss Du Venter,
Of Great Du Venter Square.*

DEAR me! I'm late! Too bad! How people stare,
And turn their heads to see just what I wear!
On Easter, too, when hearts should all be set
On higher things, and yet
I hope that Verner girl will get
A look at me!
Perhaps she'll see
How people ought to dress
On Easter morning—gorgeousness
Is vulgar then, and yet so few
Know this, and (*pauses by her pew*)
She least of all.
(*Enters and sits*) Why, at the New Year ball
Her dress was shameful; even Jack declared
She might have spared
A trifle from her train
To build her bodice higher! She's so vain
Of those fine shoulders. I should think she'd go
Upon the concert stage, where she could show
Herself to everyone!
(*Kneels—service is begun.*)

Now I must fix my heart
On things apart
From worldliness—
Love and the thoughts of dress
I'll put aside—ah, me!
I wish that Jack might see
How modestly
I'm dressed to-day.
Poor Jack—so far away!
How stupid our quarrel was!
And all because
I made him think I thought
He cared for her—was caught
By those fine shoulders! What a goose I was that day!
And then Jack went away
And left me to repent
All during Lent!

But I know Jack—
 I know that he'll come back—
 Come straight to me!
 If not, I've learned humility
 Through prayer and fasting—how to live—
 I'll ask him to forgive!
 And she—he never cared for her, I know—
 He never could, and oh,
(Bends very low)
 Dear Jack,
 You *will* come back!

Now I will put aside all such affairs
 And say my prayers.
 Dear me, I never noticed *that* before—
 When I bend low I see quite to the door.
 And someone's coming in—who can it be
 So late? Upon my word, it is! It's she!
 That odious Verner girl! I might have guessed
 That she'd be late, to show how she is dressed!
 And there, of course, is some man at her back!
 What! No, it can't be!
 Oh, it is!
 It's *Jack*!

*Church of Blessed Benediction—
 Swinging censers—holy air;
 Repenter,
 Miss Du Venter
 Of Great Du Venter Square.*



ONE OF MANY

GILES—I hear Dolly is married. I always thought you were the favored one.

DEGARRY—I thought so myself, but I found out I was merely one of the "also loved."



WISE DISCRIMINATION

THE FATHER—Little girl, take my advice. Don't let every man kiss you who comes along.

THE DAUGHTER—Indeed, I don't, papa—only those I'm sure I don't want to marry.

A MODERN DAUGHTER

By Julien Gordon

(Mrs. Van Rensselaer Cruger)

SCENE—*A drawing-room in New York.*

HELEN, *fifty-two; black stuff gown; white widow's cap and collar; gray hair; a cape over her shoulders.*

ISOLT, *her married daughter; twenty-eight; elegant, striking street costume.*

ISOLT

"Good morning, mother!"

HELEN (*looking up*)

"Good morning, my daughter!"

ISOLT

"Are you well?"

HELEN

"I have a slight headache; I slept poorly."

ISOLT (*impatiently*)

"How can anyone sleep who never takes any exercise?"

HELEN (*sadly*)

"I take my walk daily."

ISOLT

"You creep round to Aunt Lizzie's and back again, and you call that exercise!"

HELEN

"You wouldn't have your mother on the bicycle?"

ISOLT

"Why not?"

HELEN (*laughing*)

"At my age!"

ISOLT

"Lady Dulcent is not much younger, I'll warrant. She was dancing the cotillion at Mrs. Ford's last night until three. She is out on her wheel

now, for I have just been up the Riverside. Her cheeks were like apples and her eyes like stars. She looked twenty."

HELEN

"Lady Dulcent is a very gay lady. You would not wish to have your mother imitate her, I am sure. How is your good husband?"

ISOLT (*absently*)

"I don't know."

HELEN

"You 'don't know?' I would not say such things, my dear daughter, if I were you; they don't sound well."

ISOLT

"Why, he is beyond the reach of telegraphs, and we never write. He went off with Vallie Mesier Wednesday on the yacht—a party of men."

HELEN

"In such gales? Are they mad? Does not anxiety keep you awake?"

ISOLT (*aside*)

"How can I tell her we have quarreled? How tell her—anything? (*Lightly smothering a sigh.*) Oh, you know, I am so tired when I reach my bed I sleep, *quand même*—"

HELEN

"So did your poor father. (*A pause.*) My dear, I do not like that gown of yours."

ISOLT

"Why, pray?"

HELEN

"It is too showy for the street."

ISOLT

"I am driving."

HELEN

"I hope you will not enter a shop."

ISOLT

"I never shop. I am going for my fencing lesson."

HELEN

"In that costume?"

ISOLT

"Oh, I shed it at the gymnasium."

HELEN

"What expressions you have!"

ISOLT (*sighing*)

"What have I said so shocking now?"

HELEN

"One would suppose you intended to—fence—without clothes on."

ISOLT

"I wish one could, but there are men in the class, so we have to get into—something."

HELEN

"In my day, only actors learned to fence."

ISOLT

"Your day! Why, Claire Ford, my most intimate friend, is forty-three—you wouldn't look a day older if you would take off that awful cap and shake yourself up a bit."

HELEN (*coldly*)

"I shall never take off my mourning."

ISOLT (*flippantly*)

"I think it's silly."

HELEN

"That a child of mine can be so heartless!" (*Weeps.*)

ISOLT (*touched; kisses her mother*)

"There, there, dear mother, I did not mean to wound you, but our ideas are so different."

HELEN

"Yes."

ISOLT

"To me your life seems so unwise."

HELEN (*drying her eyes with some asperity*)

"And to me yours is so undignified."

ISOLT

"What would you have me do? While Jack lives I can't put on a widow's cap and weeds, can I?" (*Laughs.*)

HELEN

"Don't joke on such a subject; it is too terrible. My mother wore a cap at eighteen, from the day of her marriage, and looked well in it; it was far more becoming than all these crinkles and bangs and fluffs."

ISOLT

"Well, fashions change, and I believe women are better off than they used to be. Women have too much to do in these days to sit at home and mope; they bicycle when they are vaporous. Men are kept in better order; there is some escape for a woman now from a hateful marriage."

HELEN (*solemnly*)

"There can be no escape, except death."

ISOLT

"It looks as if there might."

HELEN

"You mean divorce?"

ISOLT

"I think a woman should not bear indignity."

HELEN

"Look at Mrs. Graves, how nobly she bore herself. She was forced to leave her husband; he kicked her when—when she was most delicate. He was an Englishman; the child was lost; she survived. She never was heard of again. She lived in retirement, as was fitting her, forlorn condition——"

ISOLT

"The beast! And what became of him?"

HELEN

"He eloped with some creature—an actress, I believe. I dislike to dwell upon such subjects."

ISOLT
 "Why did his wife disappear?
 Why didn't she keep up, go out, get
 another husband?"

HELEN
 "Her heart was broken; she never
 smiled again."

ISOLT
 "What! not for seventy years?
 What hypocrisy!"

HELEN
 "She was a perfect lady. The race
 seems extinct. What is your book,
 my dear?"

ISOLT
 "Zola's 'Fécondité.'"

HELEN
 "And you read such filth?"

ISOLT
 "How do you know it is filth?"

HELEN (*vaguely*)
 "I have seen reviews of the man's
 works in the *Tribune*. They are
 grossly immoral."

ISOLT
 "At least, he doesn't gild vice as the
 old romancists did."

HELEN
 "So you approve of him?"

ISOLT
 "I dislike his novels, and have
 read but two. They are not, how-
 ever, immoral."

HELEN
 "I sometimes wonder if you can be
 a child of mine!"

ISOLT
 "Not a foundling, I hope?"

HELEN
 "You have such extraordinary
 ideas."

ISOLT (*suddenly*)
 "Did you ever quarrel with papa?"

HELEN (*evasively*)
 "I don't like such questions. Why
 do you ask them?"

ISOLT (*bitterly*)
 "To make conversation."

HELEN
 "Your father was an impatient
 man—somewhat exacting—but very
 just—and——"

ISOLT
 "Jack is not, then."

HELEN
 "Not just?"

ISOLT
 "No."

HELEN
 "You try him severely. I have
 often felt I must speak to you"

ISOLT (*in a tone of alarm*)
 "What about?"

HELEN
 "The way you keep the meals
 waiting."

ISOLT (*relieved*)
 "Oh, that!"

HELEN
 "Your papa would not have brooked
 it for a moment. I was always down
 first."

ISOLT (*wearily*)
 "Mamma, you are perfect."

HELEN (*suavely*)
 "No, my dear; but considerate
 and, I hope, womanly."

ISOLT
 "H'm!"

HELEN
 "I have my faults, but I pray for
 guidance."

ISOLT
 "Does God hear you?"

HELEN (*severely*)
 "Isolt!"

ISOLT
 "I sometimes doubt if He even
 listens."

HELEN
 "Are you affecting this modern in-
 fidelity, or is it sincere? I never had
 a doubt."

ISOLT
 "Did you ever think?"

HELEN

"Is my life a frivolous one?"

ISOLT

"How can I tell?"

HELEN

"Does it look so?"

ISOLT

"I have lost faith in appearances."

HELEN

"How recklessly you talk! It is the influence of these corrupt French novels."

ISOLT

"No, it is the influence of the times—they get into one's blood."

HELEN

"And what times!"

ISOLT

"Oh, not so bad! I, at least, never have headaches."

HELEN

"I wish you had not told me about Jack being on the water. I shall not close my eyes for thinking of him tossing about. I shall have no peace till he returns. I get so nervous after sleeplessness."

ISOLT

"You asked about him. What am I to say to you? There seem to be no safe subjects. It is your sedentary habits and your lack of vital interests which keep you poorly."

HELEN

"I was not brought up to live in the streets, fence and box and walk the tight-rope and tumble like a mountebank. I was brought up by a lady, as a lady—my home, my husband, my children, their love, their admiration, were enough. Your father had his library, I had my worsted work. When I went into the world your papa always accompanied me. He rarely left my side—"

ISOLT (*aside*)

"How bored he must have been! I don't wonder he died young."

HELEN

"What?"

ISOLT

"Nothing."

HELEN

"Yet I was handsome."

ISOLT

"You *are* handsome."

HELEN

"Not any more, (*cheerfully*) but age must arrive."

ISOLT

"Don't you hate it?"

HELEN

"I have passed the age of vanity. I never think of my appearance."

ISOLT

"Why do you wave your front hair, then?"

HELEN (*simply*)

"To keep it out of my eyes."

ISOLT

"Fancy! And your hands are so white."

HELEN

"I am by nature neat. I detest a sunburned woman. You got terribly tanned last Summer. You looked like a cook or a washerwoman."

ISOLT

"Thanks for the compliment."

HELEN

"We always wore thick veils."

ISOLT

"What, to steer a boat?"

HELEN

"We left such rough exploits to our brothers."

ISOLT

"Well, I am glad I live now, not then. But, fortunately, all women of your age are not like you. Some are progressive."

HELEN

"Oh, the parvenus! I don't envy them."

ISOLT (*laughing*)

"They seem to be getting on, nevertheless."

HELEN

"Everything I hear of modern society fills me with disgust and horror."

ISOLT

"Oh, it isn't quite so bad as it sounds."

HELEN

"It sounds very vulgar."

ISOLT

"There is life in it, at least, and healthfulness. Women don't dip themselves into black for seventy years, smileless and stunned, because an evil animal has kicked them."

HELEN

"You put things so crudely. That was an extreme case. Mrs. McKenzie returned to the world, and was even forgiven."

ISOLT

"Why, what had she done?"

HELEN (*in a muffled voice*)

"There were some rumors of a flirtation, some . . . foreign count. I always thought she was slightly insane at the time."

ISOLT

"Why?"

HELEN

"She took a dislike to her husband."

ISOLT

"Is that a form of insanity?"

HELEN

"He was an excellent man."

ISOLT

"But possibly repulsive."

HELEN (*surprised*)

"How can a good man be repulsive?"

ISOLT

"Very easily."

HELEN

"He had no vices."

ISOLT

"But every fault. I remember, I have heard about him. Besides which, he was tiresome. What about the

French count? It sounds rather interesting."

HELEN (*still under her breath*)

"He was a bad man. His attentions were far too marked. There was some gossip. I think she was not responsible—the brain was undoubtedly affected. They separated."

ISOLT

"Who? She and the count?"

HELEN

"Why, no; she and her husband. But there was no legal separation, and later she *was* received."

ISOLT

"And the count?"

HELEN

"He went back to his own country long before that. He had done harm enough."

ISOLT (*dreamily*)

"Perhaps he loved her."

HELEN (*sharply*)

"What!—a married woman?"

ISOLT

"Beatrice and Laura were married women."

HELEN (*smiling indulgently*)

"Oh, the poets!"

ISOLT

"Men and women."

HELEN

"Not like us."

ISOLT

"Perhaps she liked him."

HELEN

"I never even doubted Mrs. McKenzie. She was ill——"

ISOLT

"Oh, mother, how can one have lived in this wicked world and be so innocent as you?"

HELEN

"I hope all women are innocent."

ISOLT (*wistfully*)

"I hope they are."

HELEN

"I never can believe a lady can forget herself."

ISOLT

"And yet you know that our existence is full of problems; that there are bad men, unfortunate women."

HELEN (*briskly*)

"There are institutions for these. Dr. Lovering tells me he has had great influence over the penitents with his evening patrol."

ISOLT

"Are men all bad—wicked?"

HELEN

"What an idea! All those I have ever known were high-toned, chivalrous, pure."

ISOLT (*coldly*)

"You are very lucky. Well, I must go."

HELEN

"I do not think that I am lucky, but I try not to think ill of people—not to dwell on disagreeable things."

ISOLT

"Yet you fret about us."

HELEN

"Yes, my children's concerns occupy me and cause me anxiety."

ISOLT

"There are other people's children."

HELEN

"They are not mine, and I close my eyes to their follies."

ISOLT

"Good-bye, mother."

HELEN

"I hope you will not be intimate with such women as Claire Ford and that Lady Dulcent. How long does she remain in America? They are bad companions for a young woman during her husband's absence. Why don't you cultivate the society of your cousin Lily? She is an excellent model for you. I admire her style. She is what a young woman ought to be. You seem to be giving her up. She came here, yesterday, beautifully dressed, in perfect taste, and suitably for the street. I enjoyed her visit, while you say things that annoy me and increase my headache."

ISOLT (*lightly*)

"I will try and avoid all such topics in future. Adieu, mamma, dear."

HELEN

"Kiss me, my love."

ISOLT (*kisses her*)

(*On the stairs*) "And in my hour of trouble I came to this woman for counsel! Ah, to whom shall I turn?"



TOO PRODIGAL

WITH love she filled the golden cup
O'erflowing to the brim,
And, saying he must drink it up,
Presented it to him.

Oh, foolish maid! Imprudent boon!
Too much she gave at first!
He came not back. Alas, too soon
She quenched his ardent thirst.

TOM MASSON.

THE OTHER CHAIR

By James Gardner Sanderson

IT was near the end of March, and the St. Augustine season was drawing to a close. Comparatively few people were to be seen in the lounging-rooms or on the piazzas of the Alcazar. Here and there on the verandas a curious or a cynical spectator might have noticed chairs placed in couples, occupied by young men and women enjoying their first glimpse of the State of Florida—and other of the united states. Near the entrance to the Casino a few young negroes were lounging, discussing the latest show at the opera house and smoking the cigarettes tossed them by a trio of young New Yorkers who had strolled over from the Ponce. A few idlers haunted the shops around the courtyard, and at the door of his studio the Cuban barber was animatedly descanting upon his country's future to a plethoric but weak tourist to whom he had just succeeded in selling a bottle of hair tonic. In the centre of the court the fountains were playing, scattering their twilight-colored spray over the surrounding palmettos, and over all the modern Moorish picture hung that atmosphere of laziness and peace peculiar to a Florida evening.

On the piazza, in one of two chairs that were very close together, sat an athletic-looking young fellow of twenty-five or thereabouts. There were no observers inconveniently near, and, doubly secure in the half-light, his hand was resting on the arm of the other chair. He sat silently in this position for a few minutes, smiling dreamily; then he said:

"Grace, dear, do you know you get more and more perplexing every day I know you?"

As the one addressed could hardly be supposed to understand this statement, he went on, composedly:

"Of course, I know you care a lot about me or you would never have married me in this way; but I'm free to admit that if I didn't know it, there would have been lots of times during the last two weeks when, if I had not loved you as much as I do, I would have been thoroughly disgusted at your lack of good taste.

"What? Yes, I know; but do let me keep my good opinion of myself. It's about the only thing I know of now that is absolutely my own and that costs nothing to maintain. Anyway, you must love me—else why did you marry me? You knew very well I hadn't a red cent in the world, and you know now that after we spend our respective and respected parents' wedding present you'll have to go home and live practically without anything except clothes and me. Why was it? Was it all because you loved me?"

There was no immediate answer, and his hand dropped from the arm of the chair. He went on:

"Oh, well—'Never mind the why and wherefore,' and so forth. You did it, and I know that ought to be enough, but, somehow or other, it isn't."

He stopped and looked at the tourist. The tourist was looking bored, and the barber was holding a bottle of the tonic in one hand and gesticulating wildly with the other. Then he continued, rather abstractedly:

"You see the hair tonic—er—that is, the circumstances under which our acquaintance and—and marriage occurred have been so odd. I don't believe anyone else's love affairs were ever quite so odd. Let's look back and trace the course from the beginning. In the first place, I met you. That seems strange, I know, but it is nevertheless true. *Then* I did not care a straw about you; in fact, I—well, I didn't care, anyway. By the perversity of your nature, when you saw you were nothing to me you fell violently in love with me—yes? But wait, please, until I have finished. Now, no man is so utterly insensible as not to have a rather warm feeling around his heart when a charming and beautiful girl shows, however hard she may try to conceal it, that she is glad when he comes and sorry when he leaves. Pardon? Oh, don't mention it. Well, I saw you cared for me, and I—I haven't had so very many people really care whether I lived or died, in my life, and my whole soul was, when I met you, crying out for someone to love me and trust me and believe in me. It seemed then as if Providence had heard my cries and had sent you. From caring about you because you cared for me, I soon came to loving you blindly, wholly, and almost slavishly for yourself. God knows that I now wish I never had, for as soon as I ceased to rule you, the love that you thought you bore me died, and you grew tired. I was no longer a novelty, I suppose.

"Then young Britton came along, and through some caprice you became wildly infatuated with him. Yes, dear, I know you fought against it and tried to be loyal to me in your heart, but it was of no use. He made you care for him just as I did in the beginning—simply by not caring for you—but he had more sense than I in that he refused to let love beget love. Well, he went away. Your heart followed for a while, but, tired out with its useless endeavors, it came back to me to rest. All this time—you remember this went on

while we were engaged—I felt as if my whole happiness were suspended between heaven and hell, on a very fine thread, and nearer hell than heaven. I did not dare to tell you to give me either all or nothing, for I knew how probable it was that I should get the latter. I simply accepted, silently, what you chose to give me, and tried to believe that it was all you had. I suppose it was, in a certain sense.

"Finally I went away. The first time, I mean. You remember, don't you? You were very unhappy and wrote me to come back. I told you when I left, you know, that if you ever wanted me you'd have to say so yourself. Well, I came back, and for a while you were happy. So was I."

It was growing darker, and as he paused, seemingly waiting for an answer, he noticed that the tourist and the barber were gone and that the bazaars were all closed. He thought, vaguely, that it must be getting rather late, and, smiling whimsically, he turned back to the other chair.

"Aren't you getting cold or sleepy? Do you want to go in? No? Well, I'll go on, then.

"It was only for a while, as you know. The next disturbing element was Jack Houghton. You cared for him (or, rather, *thought* you did, for you know my theory, that you loved me all the time), because he loved someone else."

He smiled again, this time differently. "Poor little girl, I'm not giving you much of a character, am I?

"Then I went away again, saying to myself that I would never come back. I think we were apart almost three weeks that time, weren't we? Then you wrote again. You said you were sorry; that my theory was right; that you loved me with all your heart; that you wanted no one else, and that you should go into a convent if I did not come. And—oh, yes! You said you knew you had no right to claim me. I think I have the letter here."

He searched inside his coat and drew out a crumpled envelope, from which he extracted an equally crumpled letter that he read by the light of a match. After he had finished it he threw the envelope away and tore the letter in halves. Then he rose and went down on his hands and knees in the dewy grass just off the piazza until he found the envelope, after which he placed the mutilated letter in it and confided them once more to his pocket. He sat down again and went on:

"Well, I went back, chiefly, of course, to prevent your taking the veil. Behold the result!—Florida and pure happiness."

He repeated the words slowly. "Pure happiness. Humph! I don't believe there is such a thing—at least, I don't believe it comes from loving and trusting a woman. Well, at any rate—" his voice grew tense and hard—"I don't believe it could come from loving and trusting *you*. Do you blame me for feeling that way? And yet—oh, Grace! if you only had really cared for me as a woman should care for the man she expects to marry, I wouldn't say that. It would have all been so different then. At least, you might have told me you did not really care, before I cared quite so much."

His voice broke. "Even now you know I love you with all my heart and soul—even now, when you've played with me as a child plays with a ball tied to a rubber cord. You threw me from you just to see me spring back again, and when you found that I would spring back with much more force if you threw me harder, you put more force into your throw. But," and his voice sank to a confidential whisper, tinged with triumph, "do you know, Grace, I once knew a child that had a ball like that, and one day, while she was playing with it, she threw it so hard that the rubber broke, and the ball went flying out of the window! It rolled away and was lost. It never came back. The little girl hunted and hunted for it, and cried her eyes almost out over her play-

thing's loss, but she never found it again. Now, Grace dear, you see, don't you? The elastic is broken. You threw the ball too far, and I'm really very much afraid the ball is lost."

He laughed to himself in the dark. There was no sound from the other chair, and he leaned over and lit a cigarette. Everything was quiet around the court, and even the noise of the fountain seemed to have grown slighter. The rest of the chairs had long ago become unoccupied, and the night porter was placing them one by one, face inward, against the wall. He looked rather curiously at the young fellow who was sitting so quietly gazing at nothing, and placing his hand on the chair next him, said: "Beg pardon, sir, but is this chair occupied?"

Jack looked up at him and smiled. "Oh, no. It hasn't been all evening."

"Thank you, sir." And the man took it away to the wall. Then he went in.

Jack rose, stretched his arms, shivered slightly and walked over to the other chair. He looked down at it for a moment or two, and then touched its arm gently with his hand.

"Suppose you had been there, dear?" he said.

The porter came out again and approached him.

"Mr. Waring?" said he.

"Yes," said Jack.

"A telegram," said the man.

He opened it and held it up to the window of the ladies' waiting-room to read it. Then he went into the office.

"I am going to leave to-morrow for Jacksonville. On the nine fifteen," said he, smiling.

As he left the hotel the next morning he said to the darkey who carried his satchel:

"Sam, did you ever stop and think how far a rubber cord would stretch without breaking?"

"Yes, sah," said the negro, doubtfully, as he took the dollar.

A month later *both* chairs were occupied.

THE COUNTY TOAST

LIKE a rosebud slipped from its parent stalk,
 Sweetly defiant and fresh and gay,
 Comes Betty a-swing down the garden walk,
 Through the hedges of box that line her way,
 In her primrose gown, to take the town
 By storm, this Easter Day.

Sweet Mistress Betty, the county toast,
 So many her charms and variable,
 That drinking them many a worthy host
 Hath fallen prone 'neath his own good table;
 And many's the beau will doff his hat
 And sigh as she passes, angel-wise;
 But it's not for this, and it's not for that
 They may win the sweet of a smile from her eyes.

The sunbeams dance on the old church floor,
 The parson drones like a swarm of bees,
 But never at him looks the Governor,
 Or the parson's nephew from over seas;
 'Tis a curl of brown and a flowered gown
 That have brought them to their knees.

Sweet Mistress Betty, oh, fie, for shame,
 Though low you look as you blush demurely,
 Was it all for piety's sake you came
 To the old oak pew where you sit securely?
 Do you ponder well what the parson says,
 With never a thought of your furbelows,
 Or drop your eyes when the good man prays,
 To madden the maids and bewitch the beaux!

There's a dark-eyed lad in the singers' seats—
 His voice rings loud and his voice rings true—
 But 'tis love laughs best and 'tis love laughs last
 When he sings to you, and to only you?
 Oh, Mistress Betty, there's one heart beats
 A trifle fast in the old oak pew.

Sweet Mistress Betty, play loose, play fast,
 Torment your lovers without regret;
 But 'tis love laughs best and 'tis love laughs last
 When he conquers the heart of a gay coquette.
 In the garden to-night one lilts a tune,
 And one steals out like a dainty ghost—
 And wooed and won 'neath the Easter moon
 Is Mistress Betty, the county toast!

THEODOSIA GARRISON.

THE GATES OF CIRCUMSTANCE

By M. C. Aymar

I

The web of our life is of a mingled yarn, good and ill together; our virtues would be proud if our faults whipped them not; and our crimes would despair if they were not cherished by our virtues.—*All's Well that Ends Well.*

JACK WENDELL put down the novel he was reading and lay back in his easy-chair to look contentedly round the room. He had only recently moved into these bachelor apartments and, on the whole, he was rather pleased with his new quarters. To be sure, the bay window where he was now sitting looked out on nothing more pleasant than the usual ugly row of city houses, but the room itself was cozy enough despite the absence of any feminine touch. Nowadays a man knows how to make his place habitable without consulting the taste of the women of his family. Wendell was a young lawyer with a steadily increasing practice, but if he had not been left a small income from his mother's estate it is to be feared he would still have been occupying a hall bedroom in some boarding-house instead of enjoying the possession of these "three rooms and bath."

Having glanced lazily from one new purchase to another he settled himself more comfortably and opened his book again. As he did so something fluttered to the floor, and he idly picked it up. It was the usual slip of paper that is given to members of the Mercantile Library, on which to write the titles of the books wanted and returned, but this was not one of his own, and he read, with an amused smile:

RETURNS The Woman Who Did.

Wants one of the following:

The Quest of the Golden Girl.

A Delilah of Harlem.

Evelyn Innes.

Name Margarette Ardsley.

Address 12 West 3-th street.

When he came to this last line he sat up suddenly and, pulling the shade a little higher, pressed his face against the glass. Yes, there it was—almost opposite him. No. 12, and this was West 3-th street, too. Again he looked down at the paper in his hand. Umph! Was she a "Delilah" herself, that she selected this style of literature, or was she only a seeker after knowledge in the person of a foolish schoolgirl?

The house looked as commonplace as all the others. No doubt Margarette Ardsley was, after all, a middle-aged, sentimental spinster, who found her only romance in reading these highly flavored love stories.

Still, he confessed he was rather interested to see this particular woman, and for several days following he spent most of his spare time in watching the house opposite. But anyone who has lived in a city street does not need to be told that he has to wait some time before he finds out anything at all about his neighbors. Finally he determined that the occupants of No. 12 consisted of an elderly couple (presumably Mr. and Mrs. Ardsley), a nondescript female of un-

certain age, who had her own latch-key, and twice he had seen an attractive back-view of a tailor-made girl waiting to be let in. Now which of these three women was Margarette Ardsley?—that was the question. He quite liked to speculate upon it, and he was inwardly amused at himself for the trouble he took in trying to meet these people face to face. At last he made up his mind that, whatever her name might be, the attractive looking girl belonged to the household, too, and he got into the habit of watching for her at the third story window, where she oftenest appeared. At that distance she looked decidedly pretty, and he noticed that when she went out both men and women turned to glance after her. There was no doubt that she had a most striking looking figure. One afternoon he was at his usual post of observation when suddenly, to his surprise, he found that she was watching him. And, what was more, she was not in the least embarrassed when she saw that he knew it. Indeed, after a quarter of an hour of glances and semi-smiles, he almost came to the conclusion that this must be Margarette herself, she appeared to have studied the ways and manners of those novel heroines to such advantage.

As the days went by he lost his interest in the episode, for he was a well-born, fastidious man and had long ago outgrown his flirtation days. He had almost forgotten the whole incident when one evening, as he was coming home from his office, he was detained just opposite his own door by a crowd that had gathered to watch a procession pass. As he waited, someone touched him on the arm and a soft voice said, "May I trouble you to let me pass?" He turned and at once recognized the girl at No. 12. Although he had never seen her nearer than across the street he remembered the red in her hair. In a second she had gone, with a smile and a "Thank you," leaving him dazed by her unusual beauty.

What had he been thinking of to call her "pretty?" Why, she was

superb! He heard others around him speaking of her as she disappeared. She was one of those marvelous auburn-haired women who are fortunate enough to possess the creamy skin and dark eyes that so seldom go with a light shade of red in the hair. To be sure, her splendid figure was too tightly laced, and her walk and manner a trifle conspicuous, but he forgot everything except her exquisite beauty. He found himself still thinking of her that night when he had settled down after dinner to do some necessary writing. How often he put down his pen and wondered if this were really the girl who had so unhesitatingly shown her willingness to flirt with him; whose taste in literature was so decidedly in the direction of the erotic—if, in short, this were the mysterious Margarette Ardsley. No; it was impossible. Her face was too faultless; surely her mind, or soul, or whatever one chose to call it, must match those perfect features.

His meditations were interrupted by the entrance of a young fellow who flung open the door without knocking and cast himself unceremoniously into a chair opposite Jack. He was a smooth-faced, square-jawed athlete, dressed in the smartest style, and with every evidence of the well-to-do man-about-town. He drew out a cigar, lighted it, and then muttered:

"Fiendish weather, isn't it?"

"Is it? Haven't been out since dinner."

"Well, you're better off inside. I wouldn't have come out myself, but I made a half-way engagement with a girl."

He tried to look unconcerned, but he was one of those conceited men who must always tell of their sentimental conquests. Wendell knew him of old, and did not encourage him to go on, so he spoke of other matters; they were distant cousins and had many interests in common. After a little time the clock on the mantel struck and Harvey Winthrop rose quickly and walked over to the window. It was still pouring.

"I wish you had a pneumatic tube

here, Jack; I'd just slide across the street without wetting my feet at all," and he glanced down regretfully at the shiny points of his shoes.

"So your girl lives opposite, does she?" asked Jack, taking up his pen and beginning to write again.

"Yes. No. 12."

"Eh? the deuce she does! What's her name?" and Jack rose quickly and approached the window, too.

"Do you mean to say you have lived as near as this to Peggy Ardsley all these months and don't know her yet? I'm ashamed of you. Why don't you see an oculist? My boy, she's one of the handsomest women in New York."

"Really? Well, I must manage to get a glimpse of her when she takes her carriage some day."

"Oh, she hasn't any carriage—her father doesn't seem to have much of anything, and they live with a maiden aunt. How on earth Peggy dresses the way she does is a mystery to me—and she goes about so much, too. Why, she's quite a celebrated beauty, as you'd know if you went out more yourself."

"Celebrated, or—?" Jack's tone was sarcastic, and Winthrop gave him a quick stare; then he laughed.

"Oh, she's not one of that sort, you know; she's all right, only a trifle—er—"

"Yes? Well, I got through with that kind when I finished college."

"My dear fellow, your education isn't complete until you've known Peggy. I tell you what, you've got to come over with me now and meet her; then you'll feel different—she bewitches everybody."

"Thanks; I don't think I care to be bewitched."

"Nonsense; come along and don't be a bogie. You spend too much time alone with these books of yours—you're getting musty. Come and get dusted off." There was some further remonstrance and urging, and finally Wendell yielded.

"All right, I'll go; but understand, it is entirely because I want to be satisfied that you're not making a fool of

yourself," which speech made him feel deservedly mean, for he was perfectly well aware that he had determined to go from the first, simply to gratify his own curiosity.

While they were waiting at the door of No. 12 he began to doubt the wisdom of the step he was taking; Harvey's friends and his were seldom the same. But by the time he had been conversing with Margarette Ardsley for half an hour he forgot his misgivings and settled himself to enjoy the call. We have all of us met, once or twice in our lives, a man or woman who really possessed that oft misapplied attribute, fascination. It is by no means necessary to be good looking to have this charm; it is inborn, rarely acquired, and always accompanied by a soft, low, persuasive voice. Now Miss Ardsley not only had fascination, but she had a face that would have excused the deficiency of it. Wendell felt the charm working, though he inwardly rebelled at many of her remarks and mannerisms. She was too sure of herself. Her eyes, beautiful and gentle as they were, appeared always alert for the approval and admiration that she evidently expected, and, while there was no effort to produce any effect, she never forgot herself, no matter how completely she made one forget everything else.

"You're a neighbor of mine, aren't you?" she asked, after the first formalities were over. "I think I've seen you at the window opposite."

There was not the slightest embarrassment in her manner as she glanced at him, and he hardly knew how to answer.

"Yes; I've had the pleasure of watching you for some months." He looked at her steadily, but she did not appear in the least concerned. Harvey broke in, surprised.

"Oh, I say, that's not fair. You told me you had never seen Peggy in your life."

"I don't believe I quite said that. You asked me if I knew Miss Ardsley, and, if I recollect correctly, I think I didn't answer you at all."

"Well, it doesn't matter now, does

it?" she said, hastily, to avoid explanations, "since we know each other at last. I'm sure we'll not only be neighbors, but friends," and she smiled captivantly.

It was late when they rose to go. Jack picked up a Mercantile book from the table and glanced at the title.

"Is this the style of thing you usually read?" he asked, in rather a severe tone. She was talking in an aside to Harvey, and for a moment he lost sight of her enchantment, as one was likely to do when not receiving the whole of her attention.

"What—that trash?" She at once divined his disapprobation, and sought to avert it. "Oh, that's only *pour passer le temps*. One must keep up with what people talk about or be considered terribly old-fashioned and prudish. I know you don't approve of such literature, but you'll have to come over again and bring me something better—educate my taste up to your standard." She looked quizzically at him, and he felt that it was he who was confused, without knowing the reason why it should be so.

He sat and smoked some time after Harvey left him that night. Now that she was no longer near him he could coldly criticise, and there was dissatisfaction and a certain contempt for much that she had said and done in that long call, but under it all he felt her spell and knew he would seek her again.

II

Stay, my lord,
And let your reason . . . question
What 'tis you go about.

—Henry VIII.

AND seek her he did many a time after this, whenever he had the chance. When he was alone he reasoned with himself and told plain truths. She was worldly, ambitious, vain, but she was also beautiful, lively, clever—if not intellectual—and most delightfully interested in him. This last fact was one of the things that puzzled. He was not a society man,

and he did not obey her every word, by any means, which the dozens of others who were her slaves and adorers were willing to do. There was Harvey Winthrop, and he was rich enough to gratify all her whims; yet somehow she appeared to give Jack privileges that the others did not enjoy. Jack always said just what he thought, and because of his underlying disapproval, he often told her many unpleasant things about herself. And, had he but known it, this was exactly where his attraction lay for her. She had been spoilt by flattery since babyhood, owing to her unusual beauty, and he was the first person she had ever met who had dared to intimate that she was not entirely perfect. Margarette had the same failing which hundreds of others share with her; she wished to be admired for something she did not possess. Having a faultless face, she longed to subjugate this man and have him acknowledge her wit. As to Jack and the state of his feelings, there is no question but that the most humble-minded, level-headed man in the world will fall a victim to the insidious flattery of being "looked up to."

Margarette really did respect him more than anyone she knew, because she felt that he was mentally far her superior—and socially, too, for that matter. That this latter fact weighed with her was indisputable. Jack did not belong to the rich branch of the family—Harvey Winthrop came in on that side—but the Wendells had been well-known, college-bred people in the old New York days, and he had all the pride of a race that has no need to boast of its ancestry. Peggy's occasional lapses from good taste did not jar upon him half so much as the lack of culture and refinement in her parents. Mr. and Mrs. Ardsley were inoffensive, kindly, middle-class; to their credit, they did not pretend to be anything else. They were inordinately proud of their daughter and her social successes, and they had been accustomed to obey her in everything ever since she could talk. Even her training and tact, however, could not

always prevent their display of the old Adam in the way of misplaced "me's" and "I's" and "him's" and "her's." It irritated Jack more than he cared to admit to think that this radiant creature had sprung from such humble surroundings. Often he would sit silent at the family table, where he had now become a constant visitor, until Peggy, noticing his abstraction, would laugh and talk to him in her own distracting way, and look so charming all the while that he forgot to criticise her forbears, or even herself. The fact of the matter was that Jack had lost his heart, but not altogether his reason, and to be critical of one you love is not the happiest thing in the world.

Peggy's physical charms, however, were too great not to outweigh his mental reservations, and so it was only a few months after their first meeting that their engagement was announced.

It was a decided surprise to the relatives on both sides. Miss Ardsley's thought that she should have done better—taken one of the wealthier suitors who surrounded her; and as for Jack's relations, they made their duty call (principally out of curiosity), and then went home to rave over her beauty, and regret that "she was not quite—well, you know, not just the kind of woman we should have liked such a dear, clever fellow to marry."

Jack himself was happy and proud enough. There was a certain delight in the thought of coming off victor where so many had failed—and with such a prize, too! He had one or two occasional shocks, to be sure, that gave him some uneasy moments. There was a certain letter, for instance, that reached him just before they were married, and that made him a little bitter. Peggy and he had been invited to join a large house party some distance away, but as he was very busy, and did not know the hostess himself, he had declined, and Peggy went alone. About the time she was expected at home he received this characteristic note from her:

DEAREST DEAR:

It is awfully sweet of you to send me the candy and flowers every day, but unfortunately they have been the means of disclosing just what I wanted kept secret. The fact is, I've a little confession to make to you, and you mustn't be cross and have that horrid severe look on your face while you read this. When I arrived here I realized that this would probably be my last fling before settling down as an old married woman, so as only Mrs. Hoyt, of the people here, knew of our engagement, I told her it was not necessary to proclaim it from the house-tops, and I just slipped off my ring and—well, I must say I've had a jolly good time. The only trouble is, one of the men is behaving rather foolishly (he was actually on the verge of proposing the other night), and when he accused me of various things in connection with your daily packages, I felt so sorry for him that I told him the truth. Now are you not proud of me, and didn't I behave honorably? etc., etc.

The rest of the letter was made up of all the well-known loverlike endearments and promises, from which Jack tried to get consolation, but with only partial success.

The wedding took place a short time after Peggy's return, and was altogether a most brilliant affair. The bride was interviewed, and her photograph, together with a description of her presents and trousseau (including the *garments intimes*) were all put in the newspapers, much to Jack's disgust. They had taken a suite of rooms so tiny that they found it hard to distribute to advantage in them all the wedding gifts, but it was in such an unquestionably fashionable neighborhood that Peggy tried to forget its inconvenience, and consoled herself for its smallness with the thought of how smart the address would look on her visiting cards.

If their space was limited, their hospitality was not; they entertained constantly all the first Winter, and Jack seldom saw his wife alone. Harvey was always there, when they had guests and when they had not, and Jack began to realize that he was by no means all in all to the woman he had married.

They spent money much faster than they were getting it, and he was be-

ginning to wonder how on earth he would tell her that his income could not stand the style in which they were now living, when she herself suggested a change. She sat at the breakfast table one beautiful Spring morning, looking very wide awake and prettier than ever. She was entirely conscious of her fetching appearance, for hadn't she been for some time before her mirror, making all her little plans, while she arranged that soft, bright hair?

Jack came in rather late and took up his newspaper at once. Peggy promptly interrupted him.

"Where was it you said you would like to go this Summer, dear?" she asked, in a tone so innocent that the question seemed casual. She had made up her mind where she was going, and this was simply her way of breaking it to her husband. She had great contempt for a woman who could not use tact enough to manage one poor man, and they had now been married long enough for her to know that Jack had to be "managed," and that quite often.

"Eh?" said Jack. "Oh, well, you know, I told you once before that I wouldn't be able to get away this year."

"Nonsense! Everybody needs a change. Now, the Slades say that Travistown is lovely."

"Lovely? Hotter than hot, and no golf at all; but then, that's no matter, for I'm not going there."

"Well, who wants golf? Those horrid square-toed shoes—" Mrs. Jack looked complacently down at her dainty bronze slippers—"your nose all freckled, and those beastly holes that nobody can see. It's all so absurd."

"I don't think so."

"Well, what do you say to Amityville? You would like the walks there."

"Would I? There's not much excitement in walking."

"How about Dariel? The Lawrences have been there for years."

"I'm not pining to go where I can see those chumps every day."

"There's Sand Beach. You remember—"

"Yes, I remember perfectly that there's not a thing to do. However, that's neither here nor there, for I'm not going anywhere."

"I was thinking of writing to Meadowhurst for rooms, but then, they charge a little more than—"

"Charge! I guess so! Are you aware, Peggy—"

"Are you aware that there is a golf club there and no end of fishing?"

"Yes. And how much do you suppose a member has to pay—?"

"My dear, you've not treated yourself to anything for ever so long, and, really, I think you might be less stingy about money matters."

"It's too deuced expensive for us there, Peggy."

"Oh, a trifle high; but then we must go somewhere, and what good would it do either of us to go where we weren't enjoying ourselves?"

"Lots of enjoyment I'd get taking that journey every day."

"But you meet such awfully nice people there, and an express for the business men goes—"

"Well, I'm going to stay in town, and that ends it."

"Really, the commutation is absurdly cheap—I looked it up—and the drive over to the hotel will cool you off so nicely."

"And wet me so nicely when it rains."

"We'll take our wheels and ride over from the station when it's pleasant."

"On those country roads—that'll be charming. I say, Margarette," added Jack, suspiciously, "it seems to me that you've been preparing all this."

"What an idea!" she exclaimed, indignantly. "It just occurred to me this warm morning that we'd better be thinking—" Here the hall clock tolled forth its chime, and Jack sprang up.

"Great Scott! Here I've been fooling away all this blessed time, and now it's too late to keep that appointment I made."

He rushed to the door, with Peggy after him.

"Good-bye, dear," she said, putting her face up to be kissed. "I'm so glad you've decided to go to Meadowhurst, because—I forgot to tell you—mother and father are going there this Summer, and they've taken the refusal of some rooms for us. Isn't it lucky?"

Jack slammed the door and ran to catch his car, but when he found a seat he did not open his paper as usual, but gave himself up to thoughts of his wife and their future. How was it that she always got her own way in everything, when he knew perfectly well how much the stronger character he had of the two? Well, there was one comfort; Harvey would not be in the country. He had his yacht to look after, and the relief from the annoyance of his constant presence would be a rest in itself.

"Jack," said Peggy, one hot afternoon in August, when she went to meet him at the Meadowhurst station, "I've been thinking."

"Oh, come now, Peggy, not in such weather as this, surely." Jack smiled rather wearily and leaned over to feel his front tire—they were about to get on their wheels and ride over to the hotel. He looked much older than he had a year before, and appeared worried and nervous.

"Yes, it's just because it is such weather," Peggy continued, "that I really feel we'd better make a change."

"Change! Good heavens, didn't you get me here against my will, and now, just as I've begun to know some people, and the golf tournament coming off at the end of the month, you talk about change! What's in the wind now?"

"You needn't be so cross. I only came to Meadowhurst because I thought you'd like it."

Jack glanced at her, but she had the grace to look another way.

"I don't think I can stand it any longer," she said, presently. "Really, that man at our table who *will* pick his

teeth, and that horrid child who always bites his tongue and then howls, at every meal, are too dreadful. Anyway, we'd have a much better time at the seashore."

Jack bit his mustache to keep from answering disagreeably, and then asked, in a resigned way:

"And where have you decided to go this time? I suppose you've planned it all."

"Now don't look like such a martyr because I've found out such a nice place that will just suit you."

"Oh, as far as I'm concerned, I'm very well satisfied where I am."

"Yes? Well, I'm not. Harvey Winthrop is going to take his yacht to Safety Harbor, and it would be much pleasanter for me to have him about all day when you are in town. I'm awfully lonesome down here since mamma left."

"What! with all those callow jump-ups at your beck and call?"

"Yes, that's just it, they are so callow; and Harvey being a sort of relation would make it all right, my being with him whenever I wanted. Then I'd get away from this everlasting gossip."

Jack looked dubious. He was not likely to forget hearing a good deal of talk about Harvey and his wife, both before and since their marriage.

"I'm afraid, my dear, that it will all depend upon yourself whether you're talked about, wherever you are; don't you think so?"

"Oh, I've no doubt you agree with all the old tabbies here, that I ought to sit at home and watch the trains come in till you get back every night."

"You're much mistaken. I've long ceased to expect that amount of interest from you, Peggy," and Jack laughed in rather an unpleasant way.

"Well, you've not been very attentive yourself lately."

Peggy rode on in silence for a few minutes and then added, tremulously:

"I wonder why you married me, Jack?"

"I might better ask you that question."

"But our answers wouldn't be the same."

"No; but they ought to be. I don't suppose, Peggy, that you married me for my money, because you must have known that I didn't have much; certainly I did not deceive you about it, and—and—er—well, I've less now." He paused awkwardly, and she noticed that he looked worried and pale.

"Well? I see you've something to tell me." Her voice sounded unsympathetic, but the truth was she was a little frightened by his manner, and did not care to show it.

"I've been a fool, I know," Jack began, "but that doesn't help matters. You see, we ran a trifle close to the wind last Winter, and I hoped to—er—to make everything right for next year by a little speculation."

"And you lost?" She looked straight ahead and pushed her wheel past his. He bent over his handlebar that he might not be softened by the sight of that wonderful figure and soft, curling hair.

"Yes; almost all I have. I came back early to-day to tell you. I don't know where we can live after this, but we'll have to economize, somehow."

"I won't go back home, at any rate," she answered, quickly.

"I did not ask you to. I can, at least, provide enough for us to board somewhere."

"Very well, then we will *board* at Safety Harbor for the present; after that, the deluge." Her tone was very bitter. She was angry—she could not have told why—and hurt that he had not taken her into his confidence sooner; and he—well, poor fellow, he had about drained his cup, and it had been such a short, if intoxicating, draught.

Of course, they went to Safety Harbor. What else was there for him to do? He felt too sorry for her and what he had brought on her, though it had all been for her sake originally that he was induced to make these unlucky ventures. He would not allow himself to be jealous of Harvey;

he had made up his mind long ago that this beautiful creature must have admiration and attention; that his devotion alone was not enough, and that safety lay in the direction of indulgence. He felt a tenderness for her weaknesses as for a spoiled child who had been too much petted, but he never let himself doubt her honor or dignity as his wife.

III

The wife I chose? there can be no evasion
To blench from this and to stand firm
by honor.

—*Troilus and Cressida*.

HARVEY was delighted at the turn affairs had taken. He had resisted the temptation to go to see Peggy when she was at Meadowhurst, because he suspected that people were talking of his attentions, and now he was being rewarded for his unusual consideration by having the young woman for a daily companion—and with her husband away all day, too.

Harvey had his qualms about his cousin, but they were the qualms of a very worldly, selfish man, and consequently did not obtrude themselves for long at a time. He and Peggy were together constantly, and as he had numerous cronies who were all ready to fall in love with her at the least encouragement, she was almost satisfied. Almost—there was the rub. She, too, had her little qualms of conscience, and there were times when she longed for Jack to give her one of his old admiring looks or even one of those almost forgotten lectures on her faults and failings, but he never did now. He was working early and late, and, suspecting how her days were spent, he forbore to ask her about them. So they drifted farther and farther apart, and were practically strangers, so far as mutual interests and confidences were concerned.

The Autumn was quite far advanced, and the people had nearly all left the hotel, when he came home late one

evening and surprised her with the announcement:

"I am going to take a house out of town this Winter. We can't afford to live in New York, and I want you to go up with me this week and select a place in some of the suburbs." He took her hand, but there was no responsive caress. "I won't ask you to go to one of those objectionable boarding-houses, and I *can't* ask you to go to a hotel, so we'll have to try this plan for a while."

This was an awful climax to Peggy, born and brought up amid the excitement and interests of a city life. The more she thought of it the more she rebelled. No; never would she submit to be buried in some out-of-the-way place, where they would probably have to keep one incompetent servant, breakfast at an unearthly hour and never entertain again. Unfortunately, just at this time Harvey was entertaining at a great rate, and the fun, on board his yacht and off, was waxing fast and furious, "to end up the season with a flourish," he said, but he had done it all with a determined purpose. He was by no means blind to the condition of things between Jack and his wife, and, having been ruthlessly cut out by that gentleman, he had borne him a grudge ever since. This beautiful woman would have suited him admirably as another "show-piece," to lavish money on for the envy of others, and until her unaccountable marriage he had considered her as almost won. As he was not the kind of a man to scruple about coveting (or taking) another man's wife, he made up his mind to strike now, when he had the opportunity.

Harvey was clever enough in his way, and he understood Peggy much better than she understood herself: he knew perfectly well what was going on in her mind just then, for Jack had told him they were not going back to town to live. He was well aware that a woman who depended on admiration and society, as she did, would never consent to lead the dull, uneventful, economical life

that now lay before her. He had made the most of these last weeks of constant companionship, and little by little had accustomed her to those sugar-coated suggestions which, put less tactfully, would have frightened and disgusted her.

Finally his chance came. They had all been off on a picnic (without Jack, of course) to a small island not far from the mainland, and the others, wanting some fishing, had taken the yacht farther out to sea. Peggy was restless, and preferred to be where she could walk about instead of sitting in one place for a couple of hours, and naturally Harvey stayed with her. They watched the boat silently until it was a mere speck on the horizon; then Harvey spoke, pushing a discarded lobster shell aside with his foot:

"Peggy, do you remember the days when we used to have those late suppers at the Martin and eat these things in such quantities?" He picked up the shell and threw it far out over the water. "No more of those delights when you live in 'Lonelyville.'"

She moved impatiently, but did not look at him.

"How you will enjoy it all, won't you?" he continued, teasingly. "I'm awfully sorry you can't be in town this year, for I'm going to have a box at the Horse Show and the opera, too. We could have had jolly times together."

"Don't, please," she murmured, uneasily.

"It's a devilish shame, that's what it is, to hide you 'way off in some beast of a place. Jack ought to be ashamed of himself for thinking of it."

"Please don't," she said again, edging farther away from him. He followed and took her hand, launching into a tirade against a fate that prevented his providing for her the luxuries of life that should naturally belong to a woman such as she. Her face was turned away from him, and he could not tell how he was impressing her, but he continued to talk on in this same strain for some time,

trusting that her very silence was in his favor. Suddenly she rose and called his attention to the great black clouds gathering over the water.

"By Jove!" he cried, springing up, too, "we're going to have a storm. It's lucky for us there's a rowboat here; we sha'n't wait for the others. I think we can make the hotel right enough."

They hurried down to the beach and set off, but the wind and the waves were against them, and Harvey found it hard work to keep the boat afloat. The storm broke and passed on, leaving a thick fog behind. Harvey lost his bearings completely, but still rowed on. Margarette sat perfectly still, wet and miserable, and neither of them spoke for a long while; then she said, in a trembling voice:

"Harvey, are we lost?"

"Lost? Nonsense! We'll get there all right—in time."* He rested a moment, and then asked:

"Is Jack coming home to-night?"

"No; he went to Hartford on business for a couple of days."

"Thank heaven! We're in luck so far, at any rate. I tell you what it is, Peggy; you and I are in a fix, and no mistake, and I doubt whether we get back to the hotel until very late. I suppose they're making a great to-do there already; Jack's bound to hear of it and raise the devil—I say, Peggy, you're not happy with him, are you? Come away with me, dear—I'll settle everything and give you a rattling good life of it, what you ought to have, you know, with your beauty. There's no need of my telling you I love you—you knew that long ago." He moved over near her and, letting the boat drift, put forth all those time-worn, delusive, false arguments about love being the only thing worth while, no matter how obtained, which a man of his stamp knows only too well how to employ. By the time they saw the shore looming up before them through the mist, he had persuaded the weak, unhappy girl that her selfishness in dreading a cramped, poverty-stricken life with Jack was a

perfectly natural feeling, and she had given a half-hearted consent to leave her husband forever.

Before they landed Harvey told her he would take an early train in the morning, and instructed her to meet him at a well-known restaurant later on in the day. She shrank from the exclamations and comments of the people who clustered round them at the hotel and, running up to her room, changed her dripping clothes and flung herself face downward on the bed. She was very miserable and bitter—trying always to justify herself and her conduct. Jack had been neglectful—he did not care for her any more—she could not live without love. It would have been different if they had a child; of course, she never would have left him then, and so she argued over and over again until she was wild with uncertainty, anger and self-pity. When the gray dawn began to creep into the room she rose and took her pen and paper to the faint light by the window. "I won't go without a word," she said, and wrote the following, directing it to his office in town:

JACK:

I am going away. I cannot face the life you offer me without love. It is your own fault—you have no right to reproach me. You don't care for me any more; I doubt whether you ever did; and now I have found someone who does, and who will not make me feel how inferior a mortal I am. Please don't make a fuss. Your people will be horrified, but I know they will tell you it's just what they expected from the first. I've not had much encouragement to remain with your family. Good-bye. You may not believe me, but I honestly hope you will find some comfort in a future without me.

MARGARETTE.

She sent the letter off by the first mail, and when she had packed and told the hotel people that she was called suddenly away, she took the express to New York. Harvey met her in the gorgeous waiting-room of one of the uptown restaurants, and they went in to have luncheon before leaving on the journey he had proposed.

"It's all right, dear; I've just been seeing about the tickets at the office here, and we can catch the late train and be in Chicago in no time. Don't look so worried, there's a good girl. If people see us together they'll think we've only come up from the beach for the day."

The words were hardly out of his mouth before the door opened and Jack himself walked in. His business at Hartford was finished earlier than he expected, and as he was up in this part of town he had stepped in to get something to eat before going down to his office. Margarette saw him first and gave such a gasp that Harvey turned to look behind him. He shot her one warning look, and as Jack came toward them he rose to meet him.

He was calm enough to let Jack speak first, so he might know if he had learned anything and followed them. Jack set him at ease at once by his unconcerned "Hello! What are you two doing here?"

But Peggy was dumb, uncertain whether he had received her note and was there with malice prepense. Presently she, too, was relieved by hearing him say:

"Yes, I finished my work up there sooner than I thought I would, and I'm on my way to the office now."

Oh, if she had never written that hateful note she might go back with her husband; but when he'd once read it, what respect could he ever have for her again?

Jack glanced at his wife coldly and asked, "Are you up for a day's shopping or will you go and look at those houses on Staten Island with me?"

Harvey broke in hastily:

"Oh, you mustn't bother her to-day about those things, Jack. I'm going away, and this is—er—a final blow-out we're having together."

Jack did not like his tone nor his familiar manner. He had been surprised and annoyed at finding them there, when so much had been said about their intimacy, but he declared to himself that he would not be such a cad as to suspect his own wife of

anything but imprudence, even if appearances were against her.

While they were talking a clerk came to their table and spoke to Harvey in an undertone:

"You said the Chicago Limited, did you not, sir?"

Harvey nodded, and the man handed him an envelope. Jack's eyes were on his plate, where he was moodily crumbling his bread, but he was aware of what was said and was glad Harvey was going West. He suspected that his influence over Peggy was not of the best for his own happiness, and just at present it was better he should be away.

Jack rose and told them he must hurry. "I'll see you to-night," he said to his wife as he was leaving, and she grew pale beneath his honest eyes and murmured something that he could not hear.

When she saw him disappearing down the hall Peggy called impulsively after him:

"Jack!"

He turned back and waited for her to speak. He was angry with her for her constant disregard of his feelings, and he wanted to be away from watching these two.

"Well?" His tone was too indifferent and cruel.

"Oh—er—never mind, it's nothing. I thought I'd left my pocketbook, but here it is," and she turned and looked out of the window near her with blurred eyes. Before she had finished speaking he had said "Good-bye" again and left them.

Her thoughts were not pleasant. What would he think of her when he read that note and realized how she had deceived him just now? And Harvey—what was he thinking? She had permitted her husband to be so near and not saved herself by going with him! Well, it was too late now, and she soon found her answer as to Harvey's thoughts by his manner of addressing her—a manner not quite so respectful and a trifle domineering.

After a few wretched hours they took a carriage and drove to the sta-

tion, where Harvey put her into a drawing-room car.

"Have you a thicker veil than the one you have on?" he asked, when she was seated at the far end, near the door.

"Yes."

"Well, I advise you to put it on for a time. Your face is not one people are likely to forget, my dear."

He helped her put it over the large hat she wore, and then left her to see about the luggage. He had hardly disappeared before a man's anxious face was pressed against the window where she sat. She gave a stifled cry and shrank back against the cushion. Not quickly enough, however; Jack had seen her and naturally knew her, despite the veil.

"Thank God, I'm not too late!" he gasped, as he took the place beside her. "I read your note just in time, my poor child, and fortunately I remembered that clerk at luncheon speaking of the Chicago Limited. Margarette, you must come home with me." He wiped his forehead nervously. "Home! Good God! I have no home to take you to. Never

mind; we must be together somewhere. If you can't love me, at least think of what your own future would be if you did this horrible thing. I came to save you from yourself, dear; you don't realize what you are doing, and—and—well, I'm your husband, after all, whatever our past mistakes have been. Let us forget and forgive, and try to understand each other better. Surely we are both too young not to have some happiness in store for us in the future, if we try to find it together. Ah! there's the conductor—we must be going to start. Let me think—what shall I do? Stay here a minute, do you hear? It's the best way out of it, I guess."

He went to the door and barred Harvey out, just as he was mounting the car steps. "Not to-day, Harvey. I'll use those tickets, please," and he held his astonished cousin's arm in a vice-like grip while he took the tickets from his hand. "Thanks. Now, please, do me the favor to tell our friends that Margarette and I have gone on our second wedding journey," and Jack pushed him back to the platform as the train moved off.



AT PARTING

LO, it has come, the inevitable day
 When thou and I, beloved one, must part;
 When heart be sundered from caressing heart,
 And unglomed skies be turned to dreary gray.
 The thrush that carols in the old sweet way
 Must bring a new persuasion to his art
 If I be gladdened now; fresh flowers must start
 If fair they seem unto mine eyes, or gay.

Yet, whatsoe'er the inscrutable years may hold—
 If it be worthless dross or precious gold,
 Sorrow that sears, or joy-wreaths round us cast—
 One thing nor time nor fate can rob us of:
 The sweetly sacred memory of our love—
 The cherished, the unalterable past!

CLINTON SCOLLARD.

THE REVOLUTION OF ENGLISH SOCIETY

By the Countess of Warwick

THERE is, it must be confessed, an uncanny look about that word "revolution" after one has written it. The jingle of the syllables is not a harmonious one when read out. We are apt to think that revolutions do very well for Central America, or even for Continental countries, but that for England everything of that kind went out of fashion more than two hundred years ago. And yet if we contrast Society (using the word in the narrow sense) at the present day with what it was in the early part of the current or recently past century—call it which we will—we must admit that there have been enormous changes, amounting to a social revolution, though without the capital initial. By the way, and in passing, why should we insist on determining whether this year is the end of the nineteenth century or the beginning of the twentieth? Why not call it the frontier year? As such, perhaps, it would be specially seasonable for a review of this social revolution. Let us see if we can briefly—as needs must be, postulating the existence of the revolution—determine its causes and appraise it for good or ill—see, that is, how far the change has been for the worse and how far for the better.

Confining our view, then, to the secular period of the past hundred years, it is interesting to note at the outset what the year 1800 had in common with 1900. There was, at all events, one point in common, and so important a point as to characterize the opening of the century and make us speculate as to whether there is any occult law at work causing centuries

to come in "like the lion." In 1800 we were at war with Buonaparte, as in 1900 we are at war with Krüger and the Boers. Napoleon was England's typical foe, just as Oom Paul is beginning to pose in that unamiable category. Not only so, but Buonaparte was then everywhere victorious; the outlook was gloomy, depression and discontent were general, and scapegoats were in urgent request. People were against the Government, while pessimists and alarmists, then as now, predicted national disaster, waiting almost eagerly for another Gibbon to write "The Decline and Fall of the British Empire," or a second Volney to meditate upon its "Ruins." Garrulous old men even now tell how their fathers were drilled, with a view to forming a citizen army that should repel possible invasion.

But these are bellicose subjects, and matters of general history. Our platform is, as has been premised, the social one. Looking backward over the expanse of the past hundred years, we find that, socially speaking, the period breaks up naturally, and almost necessarily, into the following fragments:

The period from 1800 to 1837, covering the latter part of George III.'s reign, the Regency, the reigns of George IV. and William IV., embracing also those revolutionary events, the passing of the Reform Bill and the introduction of railways.

Then comes the epoch 1837 to 1861—from the accession of Queen Victoria to the death of the Prince Consort. In this period, which is one of social revolution *par excellence*, we have as a distinguishing feature the strong

personal influence of the Court on society; whilst in swelling the general sum total, we find as chief factors the development of railways and telegraphs, and the penny post, with the growing wealth and power of the middle classes—the *tiers état* of our social revolution.

Then, again, follows the period from the death of the Prince Consort to the first Jubilee of Her Majesty. Over this period there hangs the shadow of a great sorrow. The prolonged retirement of the Queen cannot have failed to exercise a strong influence on current society. We should hesitate, perhaps, before we applied the term "revolution" to this influence, though, etymologically, the word would be quite unobjectionable, but the transformation is unquestioned.

Lastly, we have the contemporary epoch from 1887 to 1900, comprising the Jubilee proper, and taking us down to what we have elected to call our frontier year. This is essentially the modern period of our secular annals, characterized largely by the illustration afforded of social power dependent on wealth, accompanied by the breaking down of more than one barrier hitherto deemed insurmountable. These elements, though already existent in our social system, have become strongly accentuated during the period under review.

Glancing over these natural and almost necessary subdivisions, as they were called, we find it sufficient for our present view to take, by way of contrast, the main periods from the beginning of the century to the Queen's accession, and from then until now. It will be interesting to glance at Society under those two phases respectively.

In the former, we begin with the Regency, when Society was scarcely in an ideal state, but when there was a good deal in it which the least iconoclastic of individuals must have been anxious to revolutionize. The political lady was a distinguishing feature of this period, not, it will be acknowledged, in its worst phases, but still

under aspects which must, as we said, have made right-minded persons, however pacific, ready to forego their peace-at-any-price principles and ripe for social revolution. Writing of certain social institutions in France under the ancient *régime*, the witty Canon of St. Paul's mentioned "a few women of brilliant talents, who violated all the common duties of life, and gave very pleasant little suppers." It would be difficult to summarize more epigrammatically the power of the political *salon*.

Things remained much the same until the passing of the great Reform Bill; advance was scarcely perceptible, or certainly introduced no revolutionary elements. Society was still very limited in point of numbers, quite different from what we see now when we obey the injunction on Wren's monument and look around us. It was made up almost wholly of a few great families, some of whom held aloof from the Court and never came to London. Others, especially those constituting the great Whig houses, took an active part in politics—so active, indeed, that between them they practically managed the Empire. Society was very exclusive, and mere wealth appealed in vain for admission within its portals. Even talent gave no right of entry, unless the possessor happened to be chaperoned by a powerful patron. The results were inevitable. They were narrowness, dulness, lack of sympathy, political blindness, bitter feeling between class and class, and utter estrangement of the great nobles from the people. This was the state of affairs which culminated in the Reform Bill; this was the beginning of the Social Revolution, which becomes at this point entitled to capital letters, if only in passing. Starting with its infinitesimal majority in the year previous to its adoption, this measure undoubtedly acted as a very efficient safety-valve. It shifted the balance of power from the upper to the middle classes, who, for the future, had to be counted on and conciliated. The old order was changing, and a

new Society was springing up, active, eager and conscious of power. Even the old Society had to recognize its existence, to admit it within the charmed circle, and finally to be absorbed by it.

Such is ever the characteristic of social revolutions, which proverbially gain force as they progress. The reformed House of Commons contained large numbers of wealthy manufacturers and other men of that calibre, who, of course, with their wives and families, had to be not only recognized, but conciliated. Hence another development of the political *salon*, such as Lady Jersey's, Lady Palmerston's, Lady Cork's, and—with a difference—Lady Waldegrave's.

Of these political *salons*, still in strictness so called, the political receptions of our own day are by many regarded as a more or less degenerate survival. Some persons may question the epithet; but the difference is beyond dispute. These political *salons*, at all events, served their turn, and were, perhaps, only the natural result of the Reform Bill. They were the beginning of the new era in Society, and, as such, mark a definite stage in our bloodless social revolution.

With these dangerous forces working in Society, some strong but undemonstrative guiding power was an absolute necessity in order to remove all danger of disintegration; and such guidance was afforded in the accession of Queen Victoria to the throne. She at once kept the new forces working in Society from all excesses. Among the elements making up the secret of success may be enumerated, but only in the most summary way, the purity of her Court, her own bright example, and the strong personal interest displayed by herself and the Prince Consort. It was really no panegyric, in the sense of a mere piece of Court flattery, when Lord Tennyson wrote his well-known lines on this subject:

"Her Court was pure, her life serene,
God gave her peace; her land reposed;
A thousand claims to reverence closed
In her, as Mother, Wife, and Queen."

The Queen's ideal was a high one; but she was ready, within due bounds, to recognize the new order of things. She was determined on one point, and that was to expel from her Court all that was bad in the old order.

It was well that this should be so; nay, more, it was essential for the quiet and orderly evolution of the new Society—rather than the mere revolution of the old—because the boundaries of Society were imperceptibly but palpably, slowly though none the less surely, widening. The development of railways from the far back days when Stephenson's first locomotive attained a maximum speed of six miles an hour greatly helped to bring about the new order of things. The conveyance of the mails by railway was almost contemporaneous with the Victorian era, and in due course of time came telegraphs, while the penny postage exerted its silent influence on all classes of the community. It abolished the old provincial centres of Society like Bath and other similar cities. Men still in their later prime can remember when the postage of a letter from London to Bath cost fivepence, and Members of Parliament were beset by unscrupulous correspondents to frank their letters for them. In the days of stage coaches these provincial cities had to do duty each in place of a metropolis; but the railway carried everyone to London, and "Ichabod" was written over the social life of those faded provincial cities. The great noble and the wealthy landowner had always made their lives nomadic by constantly coming to London and keeping up their town houses there; but now the smaller squire and the wealthy manufacturer came, too, nor did they come alone. They brought their wives and daughters with them. The result of all this was the weakening of merely local interests and ties, together with a more determined and definite concentration on London. London Society became more and more a Mighty Atom.

With the death of the Prince Consort, leading to Her Majesty's withdrawal from London and from social

functions, the tone of Society changed, and not for the better. The old restraining influences were to a large extent removed.

Henceforth, what had happened in the old civilizations from widely different causes happened here, from a cause at which none could dare to cavil. From this epoch dates the beginning of the conquest of Society by the merely rich. Mammon laid siege to the fortress, the outworks fell one by one, and then the citadel surrendered without discretion. The progress was slow at first, but the end came with startling rapidity. The golden key unlocked even the most exclusive portals. Mammon ruled supreme. Never at any previous period in English Society has the power of mere wealth been so great; and this fact it is which justifies the use of the term "revolution," though no overt outbreak has occurred or is likely to occur. How could it, when there was practically no resistance?

In the days and for some time after the Reform Bill, the great nobles were wealthy, too; but they had the sense of *noblesse oblige*, and, whatever their faults, many had a high sense of duty to the State and to the community. The same may be said of the great landowners, who formed what has been called the "untitled nobility of England" in the early part of the Queen's reign, and also of the chief merchant princes in the mid-Victorian period. The heads of large commercial houses were as keenly sensitive of their honor, and as keenly alive to their responsibilities, as the proudest noble could have been. Their wealth, accordingly, never degenerated into mere ostentation and vulgarity. All that, or a good deal of it, has been changed. The modern millionaire belongs to an utterly different type. His wealth comes to him from some lucky speculation. It comes as a dream of the night, and very often vanishes like one. Then Society knows him no more, but, so long as that wealth lasts, Society is at the feet of its possessor. His wife's parties are thronged by the highest in the land.

Her invitations, it is true, are sent out vicariously by someone else; but what matter? Everything is done on a lavish scale, and Society must be amused.

Here one has no compunction in writing the word "revolution." The leading feature of this social upheaval is its blind worship of wealth. The former leaders of Society are elbowed on one side if they cannot compete with these new moneyed men. Birth, talent, services to the State, all have to give way before this new power, which is the more dangerous because it is sensible of no checks, and acknowledges but small responsibility.

This sounds like a Cassandra cry, of course. It is scarcely that—it is no worse than the announcement of a social *bouleversement* and the unvarnished description of its distinguishing phase. The changes need not be all for the worse. Bad or good, many of them are inevitable and result from changes in the national life—they are, that is, part of the national progress.

Nor was everything rose-colored in the preceding epoch—very far from it. The old order was too often corrupt, bigoted, unsympathetic. It was in danger of becoming like the legitimist families of the Faubourg St. Germain—out of touch with modern ideas and without influence upon the people. Had there been no change, no infusion of fresh blood, that order was bound to become effete and anæmic. The fresh blood came, and it is alive—or, at all events, the new order is very much alive!

It is not all we could wish it, of course. When could you put your finger down on any epoch and predicate perfection of it, while it was present? We have taken a review of a century; we have contrasted 1900 with 1800, not altogether to the advantage of the later date. No doubt there were wiseacres in 1800, who, glancing back over their century, lamented the changes which had taken place since 1700, and contrasted the somewhat unlovely Society of their day with that of the splendid

picturesqueness of the Court of Queen Anne. But Queen Anne is dead, and so is the old order, whether it be that of the eighteenth or the nineteenth century. Not all the lamentations in the world will ever set it up again. Our duty is rather to frankly recognize that changes have taken place, many of which are necessary and unavoidable, and then make the best of them by encouraging what is good and eschewing what is evil. Poor old order! It had some features which even the most progressive among us could hardly dismiss without a sigh of regret—its stately hospitality, its old-world courtesy, the tender grace of its friendships, the leisured, lettered ease of its daily life, when no one was in a hurry and yet all had time.

One might write volumes, too, on the decay of manners since then. To compare the Society of that day to the pushing, hurrying throng which passes for Society to-day is like comparing a minuett to a quick valse. Yet the valse may be the healthier exercise, perhaps; it is certainly more exhi-

arrating! An ideal Society should, one need not say, be representative of all that is best in the national life. It may be said for existing Society that it is more largely representative than the old was. Unfortunately, one factor—money—is represented in excess, the consequence being that other and higher interests are neglected in proportion. Of course, some money is a necessity to Society—it cannot exist without it. The exercise of any hospitality, even the simplest, involves a certain expenditure. But gold need not be the Alpha and Omega of our social life; in fact, it cannot be, if we are to keep aloft those standards of good manners and mutual courtesy which, at least superficially, are recognized as distinguishing good Society and good breeding in every capital of Europe. I wish to keep clear of any suspicion of exaggeration. The *nouveau riche* is not necessarily the vulgar *parvenu* it is the fashion to depict him. That he has made his fortune

(if he has made it by honest means) is a fact of which he has a right to be proud, and one which, to do him justice, he is not prone to over-vaunt. In these days of keen competition, for a man to make a fortune honestly shows that he is a man of unusual ability, that he has energy, industry, enterprise. Society does well to welcome such a man, for if he brings with him these qualities, Society will be the richer. It is more honorable to ascend the ladder than go down it. But the case is widely different when Society abases itself before people who have no recommendation but their wealth—who have acquired that wealth no one knows how, and who come from no one knows where—and whose sole passports to favor are that they have purchased a mansion in Mayfair, that they have hired a prima donna to sing at their parties for a fabulous sum, that they provide a supper fit for Lucullus, that the flowers have cost a fortune, and last, but not least, that the invitations are sent out by a needy lady, whose motives are—well, not exactly philanthropic. This is reducing hospitality to a farce and Society to a sham. Such a state of affairs would not have been possible twenty—I had almost written ten—years ago. That it is possible to-day goes far to justify the contention that Society has suffered a revolution.

The great danger of all this to the well-being of the community generally—and we cannot write of Society in its narrowest sense without considering also that vast social community which surrounds it—lies in the diminished sense of responsibility among the wealthy classes. Wealth has not only changed hands, it has changed its form. In old days, when money was chiefly in land, the owner inherited with his estate a sense of his responsibilities and duties. The great landowners, for the most part, have that sense equally strong now, though they have not, alas! the same ability to put it in force. But the millionaire owner of stocks and shares, who personifies the Golden Image before

which Society bows down to-day, has it not. He is free to spend his money as he lists. That he elects to spend it lavishly, entertaining hundreds of people he does not know, is a quaint comment on the vanity of riches; and that people of light and prestige freely and readily avail themselves of invitations thus offered, is an eloquent commentary on the manners of our time.

En revanche, in the old social system the influence of caste was exaggerated—as much so as that of money is in the present system. That abuse has disappeared. The time has gone by when a few great families had it in their power to sway Society, just as the time has gone by when they had it in their power to govern England.

That former condition of Society was largely dominated by the worship of rank *per se*, which is the most vulgar kind of snobbery. See its records in the fulsome dedications which literary men of mark were not ashamed to prefix to their books. The new condition of Society seems gradually resolving itself into the worship of wealth for wealth's sake, which is perhaps even more offensive.

By all means let Society be representative, and if possible, exhaustively so, but in its best sense it represents all that is excellent, and so worth

representing, in our national life, not what is worst. The mere worship of wealth brings in its train a lack of refinement, a decay in manners, a lessened sense of responsibility, extravagance, ostentation and vulgar display.

Yet the picture has its bright side. If, among that curious collection of antagonistic atoms which calls itself Society to-day, the sense of individual responsibility is small—in Society, properly understood, using the word in its wider or nobler meaning—it has never been keener than now. The remarkable outburst of patriotism and loyalty called forth by the war in South Africa, not in England only, but in every part of the empire; the extraordinary readiness with which people have given, not only money, but their nearest and dearest; the willingness with which, if need be, they are ready to brace themselves up to fresh sacrifices and self-denial, all show that, whatever may be the passing follies of the hour, the heart of the nation is sound. And may it not be that the present trouble may eventually bring about yet another revolution in Society—a revolution that will turn it from the worship of false gods and bring it back to the old ideals of duty and honor and truth?



THE PRETTIEST THING

POLLY has her Easter hat—
 Lovely? Who could doubt it!
 Tried it on for me to see,
 Heard my compliments with glee,
 Asked me what I thought was the
 Prettiest thing about it.

Roses red and ribbons rare,
 Lace to deck and bow it,
 These I passed supremely by.
 "Prettiest thing *about* it?" Why,
 One could see, with half an eye,
 That was just below it.

JOE LINCOLN.

THE ALOOFNESS OF LUCY

By Caroline K. Duer

THE wagonette, which had been sent to the station to meet the guests, had just deposited six of them, with their host, at the hall door. The cart containing their baggage was already lumbering up the avenue, followed by the station cab, which had been impressed into the service of Mrs. Dangerfield's maid and Mr. Grifforth's man.

The cold air rushed in with the guests as they entered, and the warmth of the log fire and the glow of the lamps leaped out to meet them with a welcome no less hearty than that of their hostess. Feminine coats were unfastened and veils were pushed up, while the masculine shells were being shed with the rapidity and carelessness usually exhibited by men on such occasions. Tea-cups rattled, tongues were unloosened, chatter and laughter broke out in little treble gusts, while overhead the tramp, tramp, of the servants' feet as they carried the trunks about made a sort of bass-drum accompaniment.

Mrs. Dangerfield wanted more than tea to warm *her* after her drive, she said, and little Miss Doll's eyes grew as round as saucers when they beheld the tall, dark, Italian-looking goddess toss down a small glassful of fiery brandy quite as if it were not the first time she had taken it in public. Brandy out of a spoon, or accompanied by boiling water, and administered by one's old nurse (Miss Doll's parents had long been dead) as medicine for a heavy cold, Miss Doll knew and shuddered at, but brandy drunk needlessly and light-heartedly, out of a glass—well! she did not think she should like Mrs. Dangerfield. Mrs.

Dangerfield, on the contrary, felt that she could be enthusiastic about Miss Doll. "Such a sweet little creature," she told her hostess when the sweet little creature had crept upstairs, terrified by the appearance of a footman with a presented tray and a demand for trunk-keys.

"Oh, yes," said Mrs. Fenton, with a suddenness that almost amounted to a snap, "very sweet, and simple, and timid, and tiresome; and what I'm to do with her for the next two days I don't know. She's too good for this wicked world, let alone for this house-party."

"Why did you ask her?" inquired Miss Wilson, boldly, from the depths of a huge arm-chair. "Was it to play with Marjorie?"—(Marjorie was Mrs. Fenton's seventeen-year-old daughter, whom she kept in the school-room)—"or to act as a guardian angel to Harry here? She's rather pretty in a faint, ineffectual way. Has she money? Harry can't be guarded by an angel without money."

Harry, whose last name was Lancet, sprang from the piano-stool where he had been sitting playing scraps of music-hall melodies, and made his way to the centre of the group round the fire.

"No, thank you!" he cried, in his rather squeaky, high voice, "no angels of that sort for me. She hasn't a ray of good looks, and she dresses like—like bags! Mrs. Dangerfield and Miss Wilson and I all agreed that we had never conceived of such an outer garment as that in which she encased herself when we got into the wagonette. It was neither more nor less than a duffle bed-gown."

"God bless my soul, sir, what do you mean? She looked warm and comfortable, didn't she? A devilish nice little girl!" cried Mr. Fenton, irritably, scorching the sole of each shoe alternately, as he stood, first on one foot and then on the other, with his back to the fire. He was considerably older than his wife, and often irritated with her and her guests.

"She's Stanley's ward, you know," said Mrs. Fenton, in an explanatory manner. "He likes me to have her down here occasionally. She's a most exemplary young person, and never gives him any anxiety. She has a little money, not enough for Harry—but then she would never aspire to anything so expensive as Harry—and a wholesome awe of her guardian."

"She seems to be afraid of everyone," said Miss Wilson. "She ran like a rabbit when Clarkson asked for her keys; but she is pretty."

"Well, I can't see it," cried Harry, shrilly. "Do you, Ransome? Do you, Grifforth?"

Ransome, a big, brown-bearded man, talking to Mrs. Dangerfield, did not answer. Grifforth, who, owing to her preoccupation, found himself temporarily unoccupied, replied, in his quiet way, that the night had been too dark and her stay downstairs too brief to allow of his observing the young lady, but he preferred to believe all women good-looking until they were proved to be otherwise.

"Bravo, Frank!" cried Mrs. Fenton. "You shall take her in to dinner."

But here Miss Wilson skilfully interposed.

"Oh, my dear Mary," she said, "I must cut up his food for him; his left hand is no good, and I promised faithfully to be a left hand to him when the doctor let him come here. You must send him in with me. These reckless riders are not to be trusted to the feeble fingers of young saints."

"Not when there are any old sinners about," muttered Harry, aside

to his hostess, as Grifforth bowed his acknowledgments and concealed his embarrassment. "I say, Mrs. Fenton, she's getting bolder every day she gets older."

"She's a handsome woman, and has no age. They say the men are crazy about her in London," returned that lady. "You'd be so, too, if she ever did anything but laugh at you. Well, who takes Miss Doll to dinner? I have it: Little Fred Middleton is coming down by the next train. He asked himself. He's just come back from Puerto Rico. We'll make him do it. We'll tell him she's an heiress. It will be an awfully good joke on him. She can't talk a bit, and he will labor along like an overweighted steam-engine all through dinner. There's a native from the neighborhood coming for you, Harry. An agreeable rattle—the kind you like." And with a wave of her hand she dismissed him and carried off the women to their rooms to dress.

Mrs. Fenton's maid never waited upon any "company" whose fortune and position did not command respect in the servants' hall. Mrs. Dangerfield had brought her own maid, not that her position did not induce every attention, but from motives of prudence. Miss Wilson had at once secured the assistance of the housemaid, and poor little Miss Doll, after ringing her bell vainly some half-dozen times, was finally obliged to make a sally into the hall in search of help. Fortunately, she caught sight of an apron whisking into Miss Wilson's room, and, hurrying after it, she knocked gently at the door. Miss Wilson cried "Come in," and Miss Doll's small face peered anxiously through the opening, while she made known her wants. Could somebody come presently and hook her dress? she wondered.

"And oh, what a nice fire you have!" she added. "Could I come in for a minute and get warm?"

"Of course," said Miss Wilson. "Haven't you a fire in your room?"

No, Miss Doll had no fire, as her little pink nose testified. She was in

her embroidered, crisply-flounced petticoats, and had a blue dressing-sack huddled about her shoulders. She had conscientiously and laboriously unpacked her trunk and put away everything, and she was tired and chilled.

"Isn't there any heat at all in your room, child?" inquired Miss Wilson, looking down her fine Roman nose at the shivering little figure, and combing her long golden hair with vigorous sweeps, while the housemaid stood by, admiring her.

"I don't think so," said Miss Doll, "unless there's a register somewhere that hasn't been opened—I forgot to look. My room is very small. It looks to me like the dressing-room of some other room, you know, and there's so much furniture that there couldn't be a fireplace, but there might be a register. I'll go and see."

"No," exclaimed Miss Wilson; "let the woman go. You stay here and do your hair where it's warm."

"But my hair is done," objected Miss Doll, in distress.

"Oh, is it?" said Miss Wilson, dryly, looking at the diminutive hard knot at the back and the dismal little fringe which hung over Miss Doll's forehead. "Suppose you let me have a try at it; your hands were too cold to do yourself justice."

So saying, she tossed up her own yellow locks and set to work upon Miss Doll's with such good effect that in a few minutes that young person had lost her hunted-rabbit look and become a fluffy-headed doll, indeed, with a face that beamed gratitude and admiration for her friend's skill.

And truly, when they descended the stairs together and found the men assembled, Miss Wilson almost expected a burst of surprised applause, so marvelous was the change she had worked; but, apparently, Miss Doll, even at her best, was not admired by the stronger sex. Not a man appeared to notice her except little Fred Middleton, who gave quite a start when, a few minutes later, Mrs. Fenton named them to each other, and ordered him to take her in to dinner.

To the perpetrators of the heiress joke, however, his conduct during the meal caused the liveliest amusement; such fluent conversation, such evident interest, such delicate attention as he appeared to devote to Miss Doll, surpassed their fondest expectations. The young lady herself also surprised them by her gaiety. She laughed often in her timid way, and even talked furtively when she thought no one was observing her.

She ventured a joke or two with her guardian, at whose left hand she sat, and had quite the air of enjoying herself.

"Edith Wilson has made such a change in that mouse's appearance that she doesn't know herself, and is behaving quite like an ordinary woman," exclaimed Mrs. Fenton.

"From Middleton's behavior I should say he had swallowed the heiress-bait whole," answered Harry Lancet. "How much did you tell him she was worth?"

"Oh, I didn't say how much. I was splendidly vague, but isn't it fun? I declare she looks pretty, now that she has a color; and that blue gown isn't bad."

"She'll fly directly up to heaven in it, uttering screams of dismay, if you let her see us gambling after dinner."

"I hope she will fly to bed; that will be nearer and less fatiguing. There! talk to your native for a little; between you and Fred Middleton she's having a hard time," and Mrs. Fenton turned away to bestow her somewhat noisy attention upon Mr. Ransome.

But after dinner it appeared that Miss Doll had no intention of going to bed early. She sat near Miss Wilson until the men came in, resisting all Mrs. Dangerfield's attempts to draw her into conversation, and stoutly declining to admit that she was in the least tired or sleepy.

When Miss Wilson proposed a game of billiards, Miss Doll came and looked on, asking little, gentle questions of her guardian, beside whom she stood, and taking his snubby replies with great meekness. After the

young lady of the neighborhood had gone, and the whole party had straggled back into the hall, Mrs. Fenton tried to dismiss her with a kiss and a brief "Well, good night, timid Lucy; go to bed and sleep well."

But Miss Doll said simply, "Oh, are *you* going to bed now, Mrs. Fenton?" and when Mrs. Fenton was obliged to admit that she was not, added quietly, "Then I think I'll sit up a little longer, too."

"You'll be shocked to death, Miss Lucy," cried Harry. "We are going to play cards for money."

"But I needn't play; I may watch you," she returned, shyly—"that is, if you don't mind?"

"I mind," said Miss Wilson, seating herself at the table and beginning to shuffle the pack with wonderful dexterity. "You might see me cheat."

"And I mind," said Mrs. Dangerfield, putting an affectionate arm round the girl's shoulders, "because such innocent-looking little ladies ought not to countenance gambling."

Lucy moved gently but decidedly away from the affectionate arm. She still felt she could not like Mrs. Dangerfield.

"Stay if you like, my dear," laughed Mrs. Fenton, "but don't tell your guardian how much I win or lose. He's gone to bed, like a sensible person, hasn't he, Harry?"

"No, he's reading in the library," answered Frank Grifforth. "I saw him just now as I passed the door."

"Does he disapprove of cards?" asked Lucy, anxiously. "Then perhaps I'd better not stay."

"Come and talk to me, Miss Doll," said Fred Middleton, gallantly; "cards bore me to death."

"They might be the lesser evil," murmured Harry, exchanging a delighted glance with his hostess as the two walked away together. But the excitement of the game soon drew their attention from anything less interesting than the hands they held, the chips they staked and the jackpots they won or lost.

Some two hours later, when Mrs.

Dangerfield rose yawning from the table, declaring that she had put up her last penny and could play no more, Miss Doll and her companion would have been as completely forgotten as last week's newspaper, if Mr. Lancet, in an eccentric gyration around the hall, had not happened to pause in front of the conservatory door. He stopped short, with such an expression of amazement frozen on his countenance that Mrs. Fenton's attention was attracted at once.

"Well, Harry," she cried, with her favorite little screaming laugh, "have they both gone to sleep?"

"No," said Mr. Lancet, swiftly turning away, "not to deceive you, they have *not* gone to sleep."

"Are they still talking?" inquired Miss Wilson, as she swept her winnings off the table.

"No, not just now," returned Mr. Lancet, with reserve.

"What are they doing?" asked Mrs. Dangerfield.

"I'll call them, and you can ask them, if you like," said Mr. Lancet, agreeably. "Come, Miss Lucy," he continued, raising his voice, "this respectable party is about to separate for the night, and, if you please, Mrs. Fenton is thinking of turning out the lights."

At this Miss Doll and Mr. Middleton appeared, blinking a little in the strong glare of the lamps, and appearing rather dazed by the laughing attention they excited.

"Is it very late?" faltered Miss Lucy, looking up at Mr. Grifforth, who happened to be nearest her.

"Not any later for you than for the rest of us," he answered, kindly, snapping the lid of his watch. "It's a few minutes after one o'clock."

"Good gracious!" cried Miss Lucy, in terror. "I never dreamed it was so late as that."

"You must have been very amusing, Middleton," remarked Harry Lancet. "Now if Miss Lucy will bestow a little of her attention upon *me* to-morrow, I'll try my best to show her that you aren't the only man who can be agreeable for two hours at a

stretch. Will you take a drive with me to-morrow, if Mrs. Fenton will trust me with a horse? Do, Miss Lucy; I'm ever so much more interesting than he is, though he *has* lately been through the perils of the Puerto Rican campaign."

Miss Doll hesitated, cast an appealing glance at Mr. Middleton, and stammered that she should be delighted.

Mrs. Fenton, who was in the act of ascending the stairs, stood stock still with astonishment. Mrs. Dangerfield and Miss Wilson looked at each other with raised eyebrows. Lucy, seeing that they were waiting for her, hastily bowed her good-nights and crept upstairs in their train.

"What happened in the conservatory, Harry?" asked Frank Grifforth, as the two stood near the fireplace smoking.

"Oh, well, you know, it's mean to play the spy," rejoined Mr. Lancet, "but really, the little girl has a beautiful complexion and very sweet ways of her own, and Fred was such an ass that he only kissed her twice—at least, only twice while I was looking—not that he saw me, either."

"Oh!" said Frank Grifforth. "Upon my word, I shouldn't have believed it. Such a demure looking little creature!"

"I see now why cards bore our young friend Middleton," went on Harry. "I thought a change had come o'er the spirit of his dream since we used to knock about together. But wasn't he quick to read as he ran? I declare, I hadn't a notion she was so pleasing."

The appearance of Miss Doll the next morning was marked with some curiosity by Mr. Grifforth.

She did not come down till very late, and unless Miss Wilson or Mr. Middleton were near her—the only two persons with whom she seemed at ease—she appeared as shy and embarrassed as a strange child at a big party.

Frank walked over the golf course with her, ostensibly playing caddy to Miss Wilson (Mrs. Dangerfield never

exerted herself in out-door games), but in reality trying to study Miss Doll. He was no wiser by the time the party went in to lunch, except that he had learned the names of her governesses and her favorite books, and the places to which she had traveled. Further questioning drew forth the admission that she loved dancing, was glad she was coming out that Winter and would dance a cotillion with him with pleasure. Did he really mean it? Mr. Grifforth was puzzled.

"What, under the sun, is the matter with the men, Mary?" said Edith Wilson. "They have suddenly gone crazy about Lucy Doll. Fred Middleton talks to her till one o'clock last night; Frank Grifforth has been with her all this morning, and Harry means to take her for a drive this afternoon. She *is* rather a pretty little thing, but very dull, and not at *all* smart. What has got into them?"

"Well, I told Fred she was an heiress, but the other two knew it was only a joke. Frank never looked at her yesterday, and Harry did nothing but make fun of her. It must have been the way you did her hair last night."

"I didn't do it this morning. Look at it! Did you ever see such a little sight as she is? And look at *them*!" returned Miss Wilson, pointing to where Lucy stood in the hall, talking to Mr. Fenton, while Harry threw in occasional absurdities. Frank Grifforth listened, and little Fred Middleton hovered in the background.

"Mary," said Mr. Fenton, as his wife and Miss Wilson joined the group, "now, I want to ask you, are you going to take these ladies for a nice drive in the wagonette this afternoon? It's a beautiful day and nobody ought to waste it in-doors. I don't know what you think, Mrs. Dangerfield," he went on, addressing the back of that lady's head, as she sat talking with Mr. Ransome in the window, "but I always say that what makes the English women so deuced handsome is the out-door life they lead."

"I quite agree with you, Mr. Fen-

ton, and I'm going for a long walk," returned she, "so that I shall be transcendently beautiful for the dance this evening."

Mrs. Dangerfield had no idea of rattling about the country in the wagonette when she could avoid it by a ready lie.

"Are you going to have dancing this evening, Mary?" asked Mr. Fenton, with a scowl.

"I'm going to have some fiddlers to play after dinner," she returned. "You insisted on my entertaining the aborigines, and I thought it would be the easiest way. And now, if you want to drive anywhere this afternoon you'd better order the carriage, but I'm sure I don't know who'll go with you. I think the plans of the party are already made, especially Lucy's," she added, with her shrill little laugh. "Look at her blush! Harry, I didn't know you were such a Romeo."

"What's that? What's that?" inquired Mr. Fenton, in his hasty way. "Where's Lucy going?"

"Only to drive with me, Mr. Fenton. No living guardian could object to that, I should think," said Harry Lancet.

"I don't know about that, sir," returned Mr. Fenton. "You can drink, and gamble, and smoke cigarettes, and dance attendance on married women, but I very much doubt if you can drive, sir. I think Miss Lucy would better come to the farm with me. I want to have a look at the colts. Do you want to see them, Grifforth?"

Mr. Grifforth said he did, and it presently appeared that Miss Wilson wanted to see the colts, too, and that Mr. Middleton sighed for a sight of the farm; so the wagonette was ordered, and the women went upstairs to put on their hats and coats.

"Where's *my* lady?" asked Harry Lancet, sauntering out of the smoking-room as the sound of wheels died away down the avenue, and meeting his hostess in the hall.

"She begs you to excuse her, but she thought her guardian objected to her driving with you, and she has

gone in the wagonette," said Mrs. Fenton, smiling maliciously in his astonished face. "You'll have to drive with me instead."

"Well! By! Jupiter!" said Mr. Lancet, in three distinct exclamations. "The girl beats me. Look here, Mrs. Fenton, I'm not going to put up with it, you know; Middleton can't have it all his own way. Let me take her in to dinner to-night, will you?"

"What under the sun has the girl done to you all?" cried Mrs. Fenton. "You weren't mad about her yesterday."

"Oh, nothing, nothing," stammered Mr. Lancet; "she is a new type, you know, and—well, she looked rather pretty last evening."

Miss Doll certainly did not look pretty when she returned from her drive. Her hair was blown about her little face in wisps, and she was pinched with the cold, having forgotten to take with her the formless garment which had excited Mr. Lancet's derision.

She came timidly to knock at Miss Wilson's door at dressing time. Might she warm herself again at the fire? And, oh! would Miss Wilson do her hair again as beautifully as she had done it last night?

Miss Wilson did it as beautifully, if not as amiably, and Miss Doll crept back to her own room.

Harry Lancet took her in to dinner, which was a large one, owing to the entertaining of the aborigines, but though she talked and laughed naturally enough with him, and begged his forgiveness very prettily for deserting him in the afternoon, he could not flatter himself that he had advanced at all in her good graces. When Mrs. Fenton marshaled the women out of the dining-room, he was as puzzled as he had ever been in his life.

"I can't make that little girl out," he said to Grifforth, near whom he had pulled up his chair.

"I'm going to dance the cotillion with her this evening," said Frank, lighting his cigarette.

At this moment they were joined

by Ransome, who had been upstairs to his room for a forgotten cigar case.

"I've just seen the most extraordinary thing!" he exclaimed, joining them. "When I passed through the hall just now—the women are in the drawing-room, you know—I saw that quiet little person, Miss Doll—"

"Yes! yes!" cried the other two, eagerly, as he paused to light his cigar.

"—and Middleton, you know, standing together at the foot of the stairs. As I came toward them he was giving her a parcel wrapped in white paper, and I heard him say: 'I got them for you yesterday. They were in my valise, you know. I'm so sorry I forgot to give them to you before dinner.' And she said: 'Never mind, I'll go up and put them on now. I hope these will match my dress; the others don't at all.' Just then they saw me, and she ran upstairs, and he sauntered off to the conservatory."

"Well," said Harry, "what's extraordinary about that?"

"I went upstairs slowly," continued Ransome, in his heavy way, "and on the top step I saw something pink, lying in a little heap."

"Miss Doll in a fainting fit?" suggested Harry.

"I picked it up," went on Ransome, solemnly, quite ignoring the interruption. "It was a pink silk stocking!"

"Well, what of it?" said Frank Griffith.

"What of it?" echoed Ransome. "You don't think it odd that Middleton should supply Miss Doll with pink silk stockings?"

"How do you know it was hers?"

"I met her coming back to look for it, with the mate in her hand."

"And what did you do?" cried Harry, chuckling.

"I gave it to her, of course, and I asked if I might take her to supper to-night."

"He's a millionaire, Frank," said Harry, feigning despair. "There's no chance for you and me."

Never had Miss Doll spent so pleasant an evening. She danced till the

pink silk stockings should have been full of holes. Her partner, Mr. Griffith, introduced every man he knew and several he did not know to her. Harry Lancet brought her favors with both hands. Mr. Ransome took her to supper, and Fred Middleton was never far from her side.

"Well, what do you think now?" said Miss Wilson, as she and her hostess stood yawning near the fireplace as the last guest drove away.

"I declare I can't understand it."

Mrs. Dangerfield, who was always sure of her own empire whenever she chose to exert herself, laughed knowingly and said that timid Lucy was a dear little thing, and she meant to see a great deal of her that Winter.

"What's become of her now?" inquired Mrs. Fenton.

"Meaning me, Mrs. Fenton?" said Miss Doll's voice at her elbow. "I've never had such a good time in all my life. I feel as if I never wanted to stop dancing. Hasn't it been delightful?"

"I'm glad you enjoyed it," returned her hostess, a trifle coldly, "but I think we have done quite enough dancing for one night, and would better go to bed now, don't you?"

Miss Doll acquiesced with a gentle smile, and with general good-nights the house-party dispersed.

About a quarter of an hour later it occurred to Miss Wilson, who was really a good-natured woman, that she had dismissed the sleepy housemaid without sending her to unlace Miss Doll's dress; so, slipping into her dressing-gown, she went softly down the hall to Lucy's room to offer any assistance that might be required. She knocked softly at first, fearing Lucy might be asleep. Something moved with a squeak in the room, and a voice of suppressed annoyance said: "I'll get a feather and some oil, and oil that door to-morrow," to which Lucy's voice replied: "Hush! I think someone knocked."

Miss Wilson knocked louder, and after an appreciable pause, during

which stealthy sounds died away, Lucy said, "Come in."

She was standing in the corner of the room, her cheeks flushed, her eyes downcast and her fingers nervously busy with some favors she was unpinning from her dress.

"I came to see if you wanted your dress unlaced," said Edith. "I quite forgot to send the maid to you."

"Oh, thank you," said Miss Doll; "I've only got it half-undone—if you would be so good." She moved forward as she spoke. A snap was heard; part of Miss Doll's lacer still dangled from her half-unfastened bodice as she turned her back to Edith. The other piece hung quivering from the crack of the door near which she had been standing, and that door led into the adjoining room.

"Your lacer is broken," said Miss Wilson, dryly.

"I thought I, heard something snap," returned Miss Doll, and not another word was spoken until Edith turned to go.

"Who has the room on that side?" she asked, pointing to the door where the pink lacer still swung.

"Mr. Middleton, I believe," said Miss Doll, without looking up. "Good-night."

"Mary!" cried Edith Wilson the next morning, meeting Mrs. Fenton hurrying from her room, "I must tell you something about Miss Doll—"

"Miss Doll, indeed!" fairly screamed Mrs. Fenton. "Read that!" and thrusting a note into her friend's hand, she collapsed into the nearest chair.

Said the note:

DEAR MRS. FENTON: I don't know how to tell my guardian—I've tried a great many times, but I am so afraid of him—will you tell him that Mr. Middleton and I are married? I think Miss Wilson suspected it last evening, and so I thought I had better confide in you. We were married before he went with his regiment to Puerto Rico. I feared he might be wounded and want me to go to him, and I could not bear to think that I had no right to do so.

We have both gone to town by the morning train, but if my guardian forgives me, we could come back this afternoon. Please telegraph.

Yours affectionately,

LUCY MIDDLETON.



A BAGATELLE

I STOLE a kiss. She did not mind;
She did not care one penny.
Her pretty head to mine inclined—
What's one among so many?

T. M.



SAUVE QUI PEUT

WHOM a woman would destroy, him she first makes glad.

The higher the pinnacle on which you set your love, the more easily it will topple over.

A man may look and see nothing; a woman often sees without looking.

To make love is easy; attempt to unmake it if you would know true labor.

WARWICK JAMES PRICE.

A SUMMER JOURNEY IN RUSSIA

By Mrs. Burton Harrison

(Concluded.)

ONCE more upon the Volga. We are now aboard the *Poushkin*, one of a line named in honor of Russian authors; *Count Leo Tolstoi*, *Turguenieff*, *Gogol*, *Lermontoff*, *Dostoevsky*, *Nekrassoff*, *Jonkovsky* and *Goutcharoff* being the other vessels of this literary fleet. In the main saloon hangs over the piano a portrait in oil of the poet Poushkin, who has been styled the Byron of Russia—a good-looking young man in early nineteenth century costume, with a goat's-hair plaid over one shoulder. In all of its equipments our boat is modern and excellent. Meals, ordered when we see fit, are served on deck or in the saloon, as we desire, and our fellow-passengers are again of a varied but always polite and cultivated assortment of differing nationalities. Below decks there is the same assemblage from, as before, an humbler stratum of society. The captain points out to me a Bashkir farmer from the region of the Kama River, who had got on at Kazán—a descendant of a race of Turkish-speaking Finns, an erect, athletic man of middle life. He looks like a mountaineer and is costumed like a Cossack. Unfortunately, there is no specimen Teptiar or Votiak on board to complete my collection of types from the Finnish Volga tribes.

At the conjunction of the Kama—by way of which fateful stream exiles pass through Perm into Siberia—with the Volga the river broadens out superbly, and we appear to be voyaging over a smooth lake. The departing sun looks like a ball of fire set upon a long column of fire rising from the water. This brings to mind

the belief of the old Greeks that the sun each night was received in a boat and carried across the sea to his place of rising. The clouds of royal purple and gold he leaves behind are presently diffused, and glory unspeakable lights up heaven and earth and water. On one of the timber rafts that we pass at anchor the boatman's family, in red and orange, are drinking tea around a fine brass samovar. On another, apparently deserted, a baby lies asleep in a box cradle, some sunflowers, growing out of a tub, serving as bulrushes for this infant Moses. A stationary flatboat has a mosque-shaped cabin, its green roof covered with watermelons, the only occupant a *moujik*, wrapped in the sleep of *vodka*, his felt boots stuck aggressively above his head. At Tétouchi, after we leave the wharf, the boat pushes back to land an old Tartar who came aboard there. He has discovered the theft of his purse, probably in the crowd while waiting for us to arrive. In his long coat and gray astrakhan cap, carrying his luggage in a pair of saddle bags made of an Eastern rug, the angry old boy pops off the gangplank; and under the supervision of two sheep-faced policemen in linen dusters, we see him, in the light of the lanterns, dancing up and down, berating everyone within hearing.

Moonrise. We run between wooded islands. This is no longer the narrow channeled Volga of Nijni, but a broad, free-flowing, grandiose stream, with the shore signals far apart. Moving toward us comes a

pyramid of colored stars. They are the electric lights of another one of the Volga flotilla of modern passenger boats, such as, with tows of barges and vessels from the Caspian Sea, we are meeting continually in daytime. More in keeping with my preconception of the craft characteristic of this river was the tug we passed earlier in the day, towing a convict boat from Perm, black and forbidding. Perhaps it is our vicinity to the ways into Siberia that has conjured up certain spectres I have been keeping out of thought, in order to thoroughly enjoy my voyage. When I look down into this dark, silent tide and think of those whom it has cut off from life and love and hope, the night wind seems to bring to my ear their sobs and sighs.

That between Simbirsk and Samára is called the prettiest part of the Volga scenery. Here, next morning, come into view the famous Zigouloff hills, of old possessed by robber bands, whose leaders used to sit on the heights upon thrones of ivory and wave their hands as a signal for attacks below on boatloads of precious merchandise. To-day we steer peacefully beneath the "Sentry Mound," the "Maiden," "Two Brothers" and "Bald Hill," wishing the while that we had time to stop at one of the villages and explore the neighborhood for the *tumuli* left by the Tartar Nogaians in honor of their dead chiefs.

After Stavropol we pass the mouth of the river Sok, which takes a turn around a huge tumulus of sulphur, where the Volga begins to make its bold bend; the chief of the property hereabout is owned by Count Orloff Demidoff. The high rocky banks are charmingly wooded, and before we reach Samára, mountains with cliffs jutting out of rich green foliage on both sides of the river create the illusion that it is the Hudson we are exploring.

Samára. High noon and torrid sunshine. We shall get no further east than this landmark, of old divid-

ing civilized Russians from the dwellers in the Steppes, and it *may* grow cooler, but I have my doubts. There is a long wait at the wharf and most of the passengers go ashore. I look up at the burning copper domes of the new cathedral, the chief lion of the place, and decide to stay on deck and watch the people. We are taking on board huge piles of cheeses like yellow bandboxes, carried on the back-rests of sturdy Tartars. The wharf, and rowboats close inshore, are heaped with luscious watermelons. Everybody buys, everybody eats them. A lady in the cabin, whom we have dubbed "the Princess Ixe," seats herself behind a pile of pink wedges of this universal fruit, and devours—but this is one of the things at which it is not polite to look and tell about it. The *monjiks*, below, are making a meal of the same character, following bowls full of a cucumber salad sold on the landing. Somebody at the piano in our saloon is playing a merry Strauss waltz. A party of Orientals at a little table near me are drinking coffee sweetened with "Turkish delight" in lieu of sugar; a cadaverous gentleman from Syzran advises me in laborious English to go ashore to visit one of the celebrated koumiss cures of Samára, where, it appears, he himself was once a patient, attaining the successful pitch of consuming six bottles per diem of the milk-wine of the Steppes. It did not succeed in making of him a good advertisement, poor soul. In a sheltered angle of the deck I observe a French lady traveling from St. Petersburg to the Caucasus, who has been all day reading her red Baedeker's "Russie," without apparently once lifting her eyes from the pages. Presently my comrades, who have been on a round of seeing the town, come tearing down the street in a *droschky*, raising a cloud of dust. As they pass in to the gangplank they cannot resist the purchase of a watermelon. Soon, after a light *zakouska* of fresh caviare with chopped onion upon bread, we also are gaily lunching upon—watermelon.

A little before reaching Syzran we pass under the fine new viaduct of the railway from Riajsk to Syzran, Samára and Orenburg, finished in 1880. It is nearly a mile long, with massive spans and buttresses of stone, and an iron cage to protect the track. Before long, when the great Siberian railway is a thing accomplished, travelers from New York, *via* Alaska, may make a detour into Southern Siberia before whizzing over this bridge on their way to Petersburg. Batraki, on the right bank, the railway station at this point, is a straggling village of gray wooden houses built along a line of clay hills, hollowed out below into grottoes and caverns by the action of the waters. There are gray houses, gray haystacks, gray windmills slowly turning, a steep road mounting until it is lost in bare gray-green hills beyond. On the sands a line of fishing boats is drawn up. On the river a tiny solitary sail, actually the first we have seen upon the Volga, where naphtha and petroleum are the motive powers of navigation. Not a tree or a garden! Vanished are our beautiful oak forests of the shores above. Over to our left an opal sandbank, and beyond it the illimitable Steppes.

Batraki is too depressing! We walk briskly to the rear of the boat to be cheered by the evening scenes among the *moujiks*. It is their gayest hour. Those who are not eating hunks of black bread and drinking tea—even a boy traveling with a show monkey has a basket with a teakettle and cups upon his arm—are laughing and guying the others. A handsome pair of Cossacks from the Don, with belts of brass links and sidearms, are consuming little round pasties filled with mutton, rice and onions. A toothless old *moujik* in a tattered shirt is cutting the red hair of a young man, who stands it under a fire of witticisms from the lookers-on. The cocks in a basket covered with netting crow as if it were dawn instead of evening. The monkey extends through the bars of his box a wretched little paw to grasp at the

sunflower seeds some *moujiks* are holding out to tease him. Women sitting together on their rainbow bags and bundles gossip and scold their children for interrupting them. Among these peasants a seedy old pope in faded blue robes and his much-bedizened wife in cheap finery look out of place. Perhaps they are going to the next landing only.

Another stop at Syzran. The town is at some distance from the river, so we see nothing but a perfect bedlam of excitement over the embarkation of boxes of fruit packed in excelsior and many coils of rope. Passengers dodge and duck under the burdens of the hurrying porters, policemen shout, the officers from our bridge shout, a fat station-master, worried to death in spite of wearing the smartest embroidered blouse we have seen anywhere, shouts—no one pays heed. The porters fly back and forth, jostling and scolding all who come into their way. Two or three hairbreadth escapes of their victims from calamity fail to interrupt them. The din increases. Amid it we see our "Princess Ixe" go down the upper gangplank to the wharf, where she is received by an obsequious footman, and, her maid following, hastens up the stairs. On the crest of the hill above a *troika* has drawn up, its three spirited black horses held in by a coachman in black velvet with shirt and sleeves of scarlet silk, who at milady's approach doffs humbly a cap circled with the eyes of peacocks' feathers. And again we are off, sitting on deck till a late hour, courting the beauty of a perfect Summer's night.

Very early in the morning of our last day upon the Volga I peep out of my stateroom window at the town of Volsk, built upon three hills split asunder by ravines. The main street, leading up from the landing, is spanned by an archway of white plaster, through which glimmers the pink of the eastern sky. In this soft light of dawn the white and raspberry-colored houses, grouped around

the minaret of a Morduan mosque, breathe of the Orient. The air is more languorous than ever. I realize that we have passed from the north to the south of Russia.

Sarátoff. Here, after our long, delightful journey by water, we are to leave the *Poushkin* and cross by rail to Kief. With all our hearts we wish it had been possible to keep on with the boat. We are entirely comfortable aboard, and two days more of this lazy and restful voyaging would bring us to Astrakhan. From Astrakhan by the Caspian Sea to Bakou is but a matter of thirty-six hours, and from Bakou to the fabled beauties of the Trans-Caucasus is only—but it is no use! We must stop somewhere, and the Caucasus must wait.

Sarátoff, a town of a hundred and twenty-five thousand inhabitants, is showy enough, seen from the water, and an attempt to reckon up the number of its churches proved fatiguing. Those of the inhabitants of its *basse-ville* who were not bathing frankly along the water's edge were sitting on the shore, in nature's costume, eating watermelon. A couple of *droshkies* that took us from the boat wharf to the railway station climbed first a long hill, where we were witnesses to the muscular struggle of a wife to keep her *moujik* out of the drink-shop. He broke away from her once and ran at full speed to the top of a bluff where the cabaret was stationed, taunting her as he looked back. She stood for a moment at the bottom, then toiled up after him. Our last view of the couple showed him disappearing into the forbidden doorway, she thumping him tremendously in the back. This domestic drama was of supreme interest to our *isvostchiks*, who let their horses crawl till we had seen the last of it.

And now, farewell to the Volga, great and stately stream! We spent some dusty hours in Sarátoff, shopping in dull streets, and at 4 P. M. we took a train for Kozlov, to be wedded—for better, for worse—to our first-class compartment therein until 4 A. M. on

the morrow. I am afraid the thing we liked best in Sarátoff was getting out of it; and its cemetery, with rows of iron crosses painted in bright colors, was the most cheerful spot we saw there.

We glided between interminable undulating slopes, bare of trees, and varied by fields of grain, haystacks, acres of sunflowers, with thatched villages and windmills. The thermometer was at $24\frac{1}{2}$ degrees Réaumur in the shade. When night fell the atmosphere improved. The porter came in, let down a shelf covered with canvas above one of our seats, then walked away, his duties to us over for the journey. There were no pillows, much less sheets. My traveling cushion, with the Caspian goat's-hair shawl purchased at Nijni, decked my couch as I lay down to pleasant dreams of cool nights on the Volga boat. At 4 A. M., we arrived at Kozlov, a town near the old frontier between Moscovia and Tartary, built on high ground, amid a wide green champaign with a river winding between clumps of bosky greenery; there were many churches, and a cathedral where we attended a Sunday morning service, and, changing our place of observation, had to contribute three times in quick succession to the alms-box that followed us around.

At the Kozlov station we found a large waiting-room undergoing repairs. The first repair I should have made to it would have been to take off the roof to let the smell out. The benches and floor were covered with bundles of bedding upon which sprawled sleeping *moujiks* and their families. Amid this were tables set with a mockery of gilt candelabra and empty vases, like a banquet on the stage; and the buffet revealed only disguised and decorated pig, cucumbers and caviare. After a night's journey we had to be satisfied with coffee and rolls, consumed rapidly in order to get out into the fresh air.

In a little birch wood adjoining the station we encountered one of the most striking apparitions of our Russian journey: a band of Arabian gyp-

sies on their way by train from the fair at Nijni to Odessa, where they were to reëmbark for their native wilds. Filthy, ragged, wheedling, when not beating their children they were quarreling with each other and with the railway men who tried to keep them from swarming everywhere to peddle gaudy silk handkerchiefs. The women, lightly tattooed upon faces and hands, had gold coins plaited into their wild locks, necklaces of amber and rings of turquoise, buttons of beaten silver fastening their rags together. The men, more vagabonds than knaves in expression, wore felt hats and clothes made up of patches. But, despite this degradation of attire, they bore themselves with a stately grace I have never seen surpassed. There was one girl, a panther-like creature with glorious dark eyes, who had had her right nostril split through with a knife. Her free walk might have given a lesson to Sara Bernhardt in "Izeyl." Her garments were draperies of tattered silken stuff. She was trying to cajole a Circassian officer into buying something from her. He, in his new uniform of brown and silver, the breast covered with silver cartridge-holders, his pistols in embroidered holsters, might have stepped out of a bandbox. At a guard, who pushed her aside, she glared like a wildcat; then turning, moved magnificently back among her mates. In the crowd of townspeople, soldiers and peasants gathered around these children of far Arabia there were several women in South Russian costume, with white skirts kilted over scarlet petticoats, bodices with green and orange sleeves, all crusted with fine needlework. As we set out to walk into the town we were beset by the quaint, pathetic figure of an unformed boy with the wrinkled face of an old, old man. On receiving a small dole, the dwarf fell on his knees, crossing himself and praying.

At 8:40 o'clock we started by another train for Voroneje. Our progress that Sunday through a flat but fertile country was enlivened by costumes like those of an opera chorus. At one

station where we stopped, a stalwart woman, barefoot, with a clear, tawny skin, her hair covered with a handkerchief shaded like nasturtium flowers, had around her throat a double row of huge nuggets of rough amber, a little Russian heirloom, surmounting another string of beads of polished amber. Her poppy-tinted bodice and petticoat were worn over the national white chemise with its embroidered hem showing below the skirt. Many like her we saw sitting in cottage doors, sauntering along field paths, or driving cows to pasture. One flamingo-hued female, the only sign of life in a wide landscape, sat upon the ground nursing her baby while tending her cow. A magenta woman, with a cerulean little girl, followed a sheep and a lamb in single file along a path. In a green field, a solitary old crone in yellow was tending geese on the edge of a little pond. As we proceeded on the journey, there were even prettier patterns of women's gear to be seen. The yoke and sleeves of the chemises were exquisitely wrought in linen lace-work and the head dresses a species of turban with full tassels of yellow wool above the ears. We found the men of these parts handsomer, more agile, of lighter build, more attractive to the eye than their Northern brethren. Their shirts of Turkey red, instead of hanging loose, were tucked into full blue trousers girded with sashes, and they sported high wrinkled boots and jaunty caps of astrakhan, showing the Cossack influence.

But the best exposition of Sunday finery was at, I think, Grafskaïa, during a delay of the train in the shade of a grove of oak trees, where the scene was one of astonishing color and vivacity. A rear carriage full of young soldiers emptied itself upon a village green where there were peasants with refreshments to sell; and their pranks over the melon-scamble that ensued gave their officers a bad quarter of an hour in reclaiming them to discipline and to the train. The third-class passengers took advantage of the wait to step out to the buffet and fill their kettles with hot water,

one of them, who hobbled by my window, a patriarch encased in a sheepskin *shuba* with the wool inside. When at last, amid general merriment, the gamesome soldiers were brought back into bounds, the engine puffed on again through miles of well-cultivated fields, with wild-flowers on the railway banks—a region where the homes were cottages surrounded by wattled fences enclosing all the out-buildings. The shepherds' huts looked like inhabited haystacks, and the wind-mills were quaint structures built in two stories, with living-rooms inside and little porches in front. It was so pretty, peaceful, idyllic! I shall never again think of peasant life in Russia as all sad!

But at Razdielnaia a shadow fell upon the brightness of the day. On the track beside us was halted a prison-train, bound east, with three cars full of dejected looking convicts in dingy white, an armed soldier stationed at each grated window.

Voroneje. A town fortified in the sixteenth century against the Tartars, that now drives a flourishing modern trade in grain and cattle. We arrived there so tired and dusty that the sight of a crowd overflowing the buffet and waiting-room made the prospect of four hours' wait intolerable. At this crisis the courteous station-master sought us out. He held in his hand a telegram from authority in St. Petersburg ordering especial consideration for the American visitors. In a trice we were conducted into the blue-and-silver splendors of a suite of rooms reserved for official uses. While my comrades went off to see the town, I contented myself with the comforts of a bath and a sorely needed rest. After tea, a ceremony that punctuates life in Russia as in England, our station-master reappeared, and in *propria persona* conducted us across the platform to the train for Kursk and Kief. It was a little embarrassing to be subjected to the gaze of a lane of lookers-on, curious to see what manner of dignitary that private door of the official waiting-room would send forth. Conscious of inability to meet public ex-

pectation, we were escorted into a compartment of which the seats were covered with fresh linen, the floors new washed; our friend, the polite station-master, standing at the window, cap in hand, till we moved off. This was not the first time we had occasion to bless the hidden hand that, from afar, directed our Russian *marshalleroute*.

Passing through Kursk in the middle of the night, our train annexed a very important pair of saloon carriages from St. Petersburg. One of them contained the venerable and reverend Metropolitan of Antioch, in attendance upon whom was our friend, Prince A., who next morning brought us news up to date from the outer world. The other had in it that most interesting personality and tremendous power of the Orthodox Church in Russia, M. Pobédonostsef, the Procurator-General. The function of this official, defined by Peter the Great to be that of "the Eye of the Czar," is to represent the Emperor and civil authority in the meetings of the Holy Synod who administer the affairs of the Church. I cannot present to American readers a better portrait of a much-discussed personage than by translating a spirited passage from M. Leroy Beaulieu's "Russia and the Czars:" "The former preceptor of the Emperor Alexander III., whose confidant he remained; a sort of lay monk, nourished upon the Scriptures and upon mystery; defiant, in principle and through temperament, of all political and religious liberty, M. Pobédonostsef seems to belong less to contemporary Russia than to Spain of the sixteenth century. He has been styled an orthodox Philip II. His rectitude, his austerity, his lack of personal ambition, certainly make him rank higher than the Catholic King. But of Philip II., or the great inquisitors of Spain, the High Procurator possesses the faith, the cold and patient fanaticism, the hatred of heterodoxy, the passion for unity, the habit of identifying the interests of State and Church, and the want of

scruple when one or the other of the latter is concerned."

I met this gentleman—who is said to have found his match in firmness of purpose in the present Empress, when as Princess Alix she resisted successfully certain requisitions made by him in the matter of her acceptance of the Orthodox religion—first in the railway buffet at the hour of early breakfast. His face gave me the idea of a waxen mask, moulded into strong lines, presenting an enemy to be feared, and himself an enemy to fear; one in every respect fitted to be the "spiritual policeman" of the mighty Empire. He wore the large round spectacles set in black tortoise-shell rims that are as much a part of him before the Russian public as were the collars of Mr. Gladstone in English caricature. I saw the High Procurator again in the suite of their Imperial Majesties at the consecration of the new cathedral at Kief, and the first impression lost none of its force. It is said that a great Russian novelist has depicted him in a character needless to mention here, which, if it be a fact, belittles unduly one of the dignified figures of modern Europe.

Our first view of the Dnieper River was through the iron openwork of a bridge covered with festoons of lanterns and mingled Ns and As; and directly afterward the white city of Kief, with its rosy clock towers and golden cupolas and spires rising through thick verdure upon a superb mass of rocky hills over the stream, burst upon us. Our train, so long, and so full of people anxious to share in the Imperial visit that it had proved necessary to propel it by two engines, slowed up in the *gare*, and we were met on alighting by the news of Prince Lobanoff's death from heart disease on the train bringing the Emperor and Empress to Kief the night before. It was said that the Minister of Foreign Affairs had just been for a walk in the fields with his royal master, for which purpose the Emperor, feeling tired, had ordered the train to be stopped. They had talked cheerfully, and on the re-

turn to the railway carriage Prince Lobanoff died suddenly in his chair, to the great distress of the Emperor, who personally used every effort to restore him.

The body was lying at the station, and we were hastened away into the town because of the unexpected arrival of their Majesties for a religious service to be held before the remains should be carried back to Petersburg. We had hardly reached the balcony of our hotel in the Krestchatik when the street was cleared of throngs of people and lined with two rows of mounted Cossacks. A *droshky* containing the Governor-General and an aid dashed down the empty space thus secured; then followed another *droshky*, with the Chief of Police of Kief standing in it, commanding with his eagle eye every part of the crowd at once. Next came an open landau, with the Emperor's well-known Cossack, a splendid specimen of his kind, on the box beside the coachman; and within sat the Imperial couple, both looking pale and grave, the Empress in white, carrying a bouquet to be laid upon the coffin of the late Minister. Other carriages with Court dignitaries made up the simple and unpretending cortège we were to see many times that week, during which the Czar continually passed among his people, who sometimes crowded to the wheels of his vehicle or close around his horse.

Kief, the holy centre of Russia, is the annual objective point of a million pilgrims traveling, many of them afoot, and some crawling on their knees over the latter stage of the journey, from all parts of the Empire. Old men and women equipped with but scrip and staff have been known to walk there from Siberia, or from the shores of the White Sea, simply to buy a candle and light it before a shrine, to send up a pattered prayer or two, to be fed by ecclesiastical charity, and then to toil back again to the homes whence they came.

In this great monastic city, founded in the eleventh century, there is reserved for the traveler the most vivid

impression to be had of Russia in the Middle Ages. To attain it promptly he has only to allow himself to be driven to the Petchorskaja, on the high bank of the Dnieper—the choicest situation of the present town—where, in 1051, old St. Hilarion, Metropolitan of Kiev, dug for himself in the soft limestone of the hill a grotto into which he retired forever from the light of day. His pious example was followed by St. Anthony, and many hermits of royal lineage and of distinction in the Church, of whom the literary monk, old Nestor, author of the “Annals of Russia,” the earliest historical work in Russian literature, gave most hostages to future fame. In the course of time, passages and tunnels and cells, extending many miles underground, were hewn out, and occupied by monks now long passed into the glittering ranks of Russian sainthood. One may see what is alleged to be left of these holy anchorites, buried in the tombs where they had long existed, by paying a rouble at the entrance of the catacombs, with twenty copecks for a green candle striped with gold to carry in the hand; and, if satisfied, another rouble on coming out, for “oil to burn before the Saints.”

In the catacombs of this Lavra are always to be encountered processions of people holding lighted tapers lagging in the wake of a brown brother with long hair, who allows them to halt briefly before niches and chapels containing open coffins, with silken and jeweled palls stretched over the grim outlines of bodies he claims have been preserved from corruption by miraculous power. The most striking of this fraternity of saints is John the Suffering, who was buried standing, as he had lived for twenty years, in a pit hollowed by himself. His head, covered with a mitre, and a collar protruding from the earth, are, fortunately, all one sees.

The brown brother hurried us by the niches as only a guide can hurry an interested traveler. Above this gloomy mausoleum rises the famous Petchersky Monastery, one of the

three great Lavra, or monks' training schools, of Russia, and the core of Russia's ecclesiastical history. It is an institution wealthy enough to have contributed a loan of moneys to its sovereign with which to carry on a war; from its printing presses, for the production of liturgical literature, and its bakeries, that produce blessed bread and consecrated wafers, a large income is derived. The guardian Madonna of its Cathedral of the Assumption—where the Emperors of Russia go first and last on their visits to Kiev to pray before her shrine—receives yearly from her votaries a fortune in offerings. Her treasury is filled with princely belongings of heaped-up gold, silver and gems, and within her citadel walls are churches, chapels, a bishop's house and monks' dormitories, a pilgrims' hotel and lodging-house, shops for the sale of religious souvenirs, and the industrial establishments already named. Our own final visit to the monastery was unintentionally made on the afternoon when the Emperor and Empress came there to pray in the Assumption Church, just before taking their train to leave Kiev. Around the base of the cathedral, with its seven golden domes, the outside decorated with frescoes of saints, like St. Mark's at Venice, were grouped a double line of monks and lay brothers in sombre robes of black or brown. On the farther side of a strip of red carpet gathered police, soldiers, townspeople, peasants and pilgrims. To the right of the cathedral rose the campanile of the clock tower. We sat on a little bench in front of one of the monks' cells in the court, enjoying the scene until, without preliminary pomp, a plain landau appeared, from which the Emperor and Empress alighted, to be met and surrounded by a line of priests resplendent in gold brocade, the cortège passing at once into the church. A curtain dropped behind them, and we took that moment to walk down the steeply graded pavement at the rear of the cathedral, under the white arcades leading to the little shop at

the end, where one is apt to spend a few roubles in purchasing religious curios.

From this point we crossed into the courtyard of the pilgrims' hostelry, where the groups, especially at the hours when the wayfarers are fed by the monastery, explain why Kief is called the Jerusalem of Russia. The scene is like a page torn from the Old Testament. Dirty, infirm, deformed, bandaged rather than clothed, the numerous poor pilgrims sit around on the flags, or kneel praying under shrines, exposing their maladies without reserve. One idiotic-looking woman with a torn garment, her unkempt hair straggling on her neck, was washing her feet in a tin basin. Two weary pedestrians, newly arrived, were taking from their shoulders packs covered with goat-skin, the better to rest themselves against a wall. In the office, where a brown lay-brother was sorting out a pile of leprous postal cards, a poor old man with a wry neck was bending on his staff, waiting patiently to hear if there was anything for him from his far distant home. The cells for the pilgrims' sleeping accommodations are whitewashed, but ill-smelling, in spite of disinfectants, a fresh breeze playing down the corridors between them and the clean odor of bread baking in the convent ovens near at hand. At the far end of the precinct of this court, a little village in itself, we were surprised to find a large hotel, like a Summer boarding-house, to which, as we passed, drove up a carriage containing a well-dressed woman, accompanied by a boy. She, too, was a pilgrim, arriving to spend a period of penitence or expiation in the Lavra.

When we returned to the cathedral the Emperor and Empress had gone, and the crowds had melted from around it. Going down a few steps to an iron grillage, we entered the body of the church. In the dim light it was almost impossible to avoid stepping upon the distressing objects that encumbered the floor. They are pilgrims, who make no appeal for

charity, but are so dirty, misshapen and helpless one cannot look at them without physical disgust. An old woman crouching in tatters at the foot of a gorgeous sarcophagus resembles nothing but a toad. Her rags brush a hanging of scarlet and gold, under which the beautiful young Empress has just been kneeling.

Thronging amid the devotional nomads came clergy, citizens, soldiers, peasants, eager to tread in the footprints of their sovereigns. In the gloom, propped upon the "remember-benches" of their stalls, stood a row of dark-robed, dark-visaged monks, who, but that their lips moved in prayer, might have been carvings in black oak.

While the body of the church was in deep shadow, upon the high iconostase of silver gilt—a present of Peter the Great—and upon the glittering icon of the Lady of the Cathedral fell a flood of radiance from the wax tapers lighted for the Emperor. The sonorous voices of the choir pealed grandly on the incense-burdened air. The poor creatures on the flagging bent their bodies lower, lower, till they seemed to be crawling on the ground.

Going away from the Lavra, we saw under a vaulted entranceway, decorated with gilded frescoes, which they call the Holy Door, a priest anointing with sacred oil those who desired this privilege. As, from this point, I looked back into the walled enclosure, with its archaic groups, passing hither and thither beneath the emblazoned walls and golden summits of the cathedral, I felt a conviction that, unless Fate might some day redirect my steps to the Petchersky Monastery at Kief, I should not again behold the splendor and the squalor of mediæval ages thus combined.

A strong contrast to this scene was the consecration of the new cathedral in honor of holy St. Vladimir, whose statue, when seen at evening holding aloft a fiery cross on a height above the city, is one of the best ornaments of Kief.

It occurred the day after our arrival, and although unprovided with

tickets to view the ceremony, we went there, under the ægis of a friend at court, through whom the Governor-General had extended to us a kind special invitation to be present. At first we made only part of an immense crowd of spectators, gathered around a hollow square of mounted Cossacks guarding the church, within which the services were already in progress. One may have seen church functions and military turnouts in many countries, and yet be unprepared for the extraordinary sheen and glitter of those in Russia. We gazed about us in delight, and presently our eyes, still blinking with the gleam of gold in domes and doors, priests' vestments and officers' gala uniforms, and feeling rather abashed than otherwise by our distinction, we saw the barriers of steel give way before us, and were at once passed through a gap in the wall of Cossacks. Attended by the handsome and soldierly Chief of Police in person, we then crossed the empty space before the church and were consigned to safe places behind its golden grilles. Almost immediately the clergy, with the Emperor and Empress and Imperial family, each carrying a lighted taper, passed out to make a circuit of the edifice upon a platform covered with crimson carpet. By the time they returned we had been taken inside and put into the front rank of those permitted to stand on the left hand of the chancel, there to remain during a long ceremonial of great magnificence of detail, accompanied by the most heavenly singing of a choir of men and boys. One of the two golden chairs placed to the right of the chancel for the Emperor and Empress was occupied occasionally by Her Imperial Highness. This stately young matron, gowned in white brocade patterned faintly in mauve and rose, with a little white bonnet, a white glove on her left hand and a white parasol of ruffled gauze, on the stick of which, from time to time, she rested as she stood, appeared to me far more beautiful than the Princess Alixe I had seen two years before in London—indeed,

the loveliest of all the royal ladies I have chanced to look upon. The Emperor, who was in uniform, stood during most of the ceremony. He looked pale and serious, unlike, in this respect, his jolly English cousin, the Duke of York, whom he strongly resembles in feature. Behind their Majesties were grouped the Grand Dukes and Duchesses, an imposing array of handsome men and women. The interior of the new cathedral, a mass of dead gold relieved by paintings of saints, was filled to its utmost capacity; all of the women in white or light colors, as etiquette demands when in attendance upon the Empress; the men not in uniform wearing evening clothes, with white gloves—which is conventional court costume for civilians. Beyond a space kept open to the side door stood a crowd of monks, priests and soldiers, and in their foreground a pale pope knelt, sweeping repeatedly the marble floor before him with his long auburn locks. In the line with me stood a nurse on whose breast were the red cross and badges of honor won in the ambulance service of the Russo-Turkish War. Next to her a devout lady in rumpled satin, with a pearl necklace above her high gown, brooches stuck everywhere, and large opal earrings. As often as the nurse lifted her high starched cap from the dust of abasement, the lady's bonnet went down into it, and *vice versa*; and so with everyone in my range of vision.

For hours the gorgeous service went on, the angelic music soared to heaven, the priests passed and repassed before the Emperor and Empress, swinging their censers, till at last the doors of the iconostase clashed together, the scarlet curtain of the sanctuary, seen through the gilded screen of open-work, was drawn, and the Imperial train rose to withdraw. In the square outside the populace, who, as far as I could see, has in Russia as free a share of sightseeing at second-hand as have the democratic crowds in America, awaited its turn to stream into the cathedral. Cannon were booming, joy-bells clanging in the

steeple. A file of soldiers on either side the portal held up the tattered banners of past wars, under which the sovereigns walked to their carriage and drove away amid roars of applause.

We saw their Majesties again next day at the unveiling of a statue of the Emperor Nicholas I., the great-grandfather of this Emperor, and the handsomest man of his day—or of any day, one is inclined to think. The same jam of loyal people attended the progress of the Imperial party to a marquise of white and blue, decked with double eagles of silver and silver fringe. One of the attractive groups in the enclosure was a "select school for young ladies," daughters of noblemen and generals, who wore charming Puritan costumes of dark green, with bib collars, half-sleeves and aprons of starched snowy white, and little scoop straw hats tied with white ribbons. Two sweet girl-graduates among them were in gray silks, low-cut, with gauze fichus covering the necks, gauze aprons, white hats, bare arms, and badges of honor worn upon their breasts. The governesses in charge of this dove-cote were to be recognized by uniforms of staring ultramarine blue.

In the town, everywhere, during those days we met a tumult of excitement. Shop windows were decorated, garlands of oak leaves and artificial flowers were hung between the lamp-posts; there were illuminations every night. No house so poor but could afford to throw a little Russian tricolor to the wind for the young Imperial pair. The rattle of wheels over the cobblestones was incessant, deafening; bands were playing, troops were marching wherever one turned. Above all sounded the hum of a well-pleased multitude.

Sitting one evening on our balcony, looking down at the crowd, I noticed a couple of young peasants, evidently lovers, walking hand in hand and smiling upon each other as if the Kreschatik were Eden and they the primal man and woman—Adam, a strapping fellow in a blouse worked in

the best stitches Eve could set for him; Eve, a stalwart maiden, in little Russian chemise and petticoat, with a sleeveless jacket of wadded white hanging loose from her shoulders. We imagined the old age of this happy twain, when they would still be prattling to their grandchildren about the wonderful night when Kief was illuminated in honor of the Czar!

I cannot leave Kief without a word about the convent and schools built and maintained there by an illustrious lady, Her Imperial Highness the Grand Duchess Nicholas, Princess of Oldenburg, and great-aunt of the Emperor. They told us that when the Metropolitan of Kief calls upon this Princess she goes first upon her knees to kiss his hand, as is fitting in a true daughter of the Church; then, rising, gives him her hand to kiss, as be seems a Grand Duchess of the Empire. Her convent, which we visited by invitation, includes schools and hospitals, all built within the enclosure of a delightful garden on the slope of a hill above the Dnieper. The garlands hung for the Emperor and Empress, who had just laid the corner-stone of a new chapel in the grounds, had not faded when we walked between them over a red carpet spread from the carriage to the portal. There was nothing in this model establishment to confirm the popular idea of conventual severity; it was like a spacious country-house full of what we call English and American comforts. Upon one side of the hall are the apartments of the Grand Duchess, to the other those of the abbess, who is her second in command. While waiting for the Grand Duchess to receive us we were made welcome by this charming, bright-faced woman, wearing a quaint little black velvet helmet over her crimped white cape and veil in one, a wide blue ribbon with a crucifix around her neck, and an amber rosary relieving her frock of black woolen stuff.

Attended by a couple of rosy and smiling nuns, who bowed thrice in answering or addressing her, the ab-

bess led the way for us about the rooms, then into the Art School. This large and cheerful apartment, with enchanting views from its many windows, was empty at the moment save for a pretty little drawing mistress, who showed me with pride her casts, models and the excellent work of her pupils left upon easels and tables. The whole house was as

clean as the cell of a bee, the floors shining, the furniture of a mirrorlike brightness. When, through my interpreter, I complimented the abbess upon this fact, she put out her friendly hand to stroke mine, telling me, with a jolly laugh, that from foundation to finish it was a woman's work for women, a matter in which America had set Russia good examples.



A MAN OF INSTINCTS

"YOU have no idea, papa, what a fine pride he has."

PAPA—What makes you think that?

"Oh, he is constantly telling me how he hates the idea of being a burden to you."



A TRYING OCCASION

"YOU are late, madam."

"You said eleven."

"Yes, madam; but yesterday."

"My! how stupid! Did it matter?"

"It always matters with me, madam."

"I am sorry. I beg your pardon."

"It is granted, madam. Slip this off, please."

"The waist first?"

"Oh, certainly. There. Erect, please."

"How is that?"

"Better. Emile, the pins."

"I'm sorry, now, you didn't let me have the other material. This looks——"

"Tut, madam. This will be perfect when it is completed."

"But——"

"You must allow me to be the judge, madam. Your elbow, please."

"The sleeve seems awkward."

"You do not know. Wait."

"Can I stand that so tight around my neck?"

"Certainly, madam. It is necessary."

"I am afraid that color——"

"Madam, you do not know. *I am the judge.*"

"I think I am about to faint."

"How dare you, madam? Don't you see that I am in a hurry?"

THE FASCINATION OF ALPHONSE

By Max Pemberton

ROBERT HILL, idler, had not been twenty hours in Paris when he found himself, as became a true child of the brush, once more in his old rooms in the Avenue de Clichy, where Madame Rabon, *la maîtresse*, was moved to tears at the sight of him, and Mamie, her daughter, was so glad that she could do nothing but cry: "Oh, monsieur!" For a little while all three talked together in the incoherent babble of welcome and expostulation; but the strident tones of Madame at length prevailed, and hers was the voice the passers-by heard.

"Three years—my word! three years—since Monsieur Robaire was in Paris. And all the others gone to the dogs!—Lafiche, Dordo, Négrangier. Wonderful, wonderful! M'sieur has come back to paint again? He will be famous, no doubt. All the world has heard of his pictures. He did not forget old Madame Rabon because he was great. And she—she knew his very step upon the stairs."

Robert Hill, phlegmatic always, lighted a cigarette, and enjoyed this little hour of greatness.

He was surprised that all the world had heard of his pictures, for he had yet to hear of them himself, and they were painted only by his imagination. Nevertheless, it was something to be famous for Madame Rabon.

"Ah," he said, "all gone to the devil, eh? Lafiche, Dordo, Négrangier. You surprise me, madam. I would have promised a career to Eugène Lafiche, at least."

"He was lazy, m'sieur; he painted the big picture, 'The End of the World,' so big that they could not get

it out of the window to take away. The critics came and drank his brandy, and said the trumpets were just like life and that he should blow them. My word, he is blowing a trumpet upon an automobile now—thirty francs a week—for an English milord."

"Poor Eugène—poor fellow! And old Paul Dordo, what of him?"

"Little that is good, m'sieur. The Germans ruined him. He painted the portrait of la Baronne Heinhaultz—a beautiful portrait, which made the baron angry. 'She is not so pretty as that—I shall have all the young men in Paris at my house,' he said; 'I will not pay you!' My poor Paul sat upon his doorstep—Faubourg St. Germain, 28—for ten days, and starved himself to death. He was always proud, my Paul. 'Monsieur le Baron,' he wrote, 'I have cast pearls before swine, to my misery; here are the husks, which will be more to their taste.' Ah! the brave, he died happily because he knew the baron must pay for his funeral."

Robert Hill shook his head at this pathetic recital, and scarcely dared to venture another question.

"Négrangier," he said, hesitatingly; "is it possible—?"

"More than possible, m'sieur—he gave up his atelier, his friends, everything, to go and play the cornet-à-piston at the Café Robespierre. He is in love, m'sieur—"

"He always was, I remember. Poor Négrangier! When I left him he had a scheme to repaint the roof of the Madeleine. What a come down! Eh, Mamie, you were sorry for him?"

Mamie, whose pretty face was very sad and wistful, thought of another, and said so.

"Not for him, but for Alphonse. You remember Alphonse, m'sieur, Alphonse Bazo? Well, he is going to the wars——"

"To the wars, Mamie—but there are no wars! At least, there were none when I drove through Paris this morning."

"You do not understand, m'sieur. I speak of your wars, not of ours. Alphonse has set his heart upon a blue tunic with gold buttons. He says that a sea voyage will do him good—and there will be no English in Asia when he gets there——"

"You mean in Africa, Mamie——?"

"As you please, m'sieur. Alphonse says Asia. I do not listen. He is mad to wear the blue tunic and the helmet. You remember the old sword that used to hang above the stove in Lorot's atelier? Alphonse has it now. He has sworn to cut off the head of Sir Lord Chamberlain and bring it to Paris on a charger. My poor Alphonse—and he will be a month away."

The phlegmatic "Monsieur Robaire" pricked up his ears at the strange tidings which fell from Mamie's pretty lips. He had read the newspaper tales of French mercenaries for South Africa, but believed none of them. Here, in his old lodgings, revisited after three years, they were confirmed thus strikingly. Frenchmen, after all, were going to the war.

"Madame Rabon," he exclaimed, suddenly, "do not forget that I take *déjeuner* at one. Mamie will see to the room for me."

The withered old lady was all bustle at the rebuke. She hurried from the room to borrow twenty francs from the proprietor opposite on the strength of "Monsieur Robaire's" return—"a rich man, whose pictures were bought by the Queen of England," she added, by way of picturesque detail. He would breakfast *à milord*. So much money she had never heard of as this famous man

showed when he opened his purse to pay the coachman. And he had come back to Paris for one, two, perhaps three months. Mamie, meanwhile, was telling "Monsieur Robaire" all about Alphonse and his intentions.

"There are two hundred of them, m'sieur, and Carlo Vetucchi, an Italian, is collecting the money. They drill every night, and the police know nothing. They are to wear blue tunics—sky blue—and gold buttons. Alphonse would like to walk to the war, for he is ill, so ill, in the ships—*ma foi!* he will not fight when he is ill. But it is far, and besides, it is good to be ill, for afterward you will be better. They call themselves the Sons of Liberty, and the king of Asia—no, Africa, m'sieur—has written them a letter. Alphonse says it was a beautiful letter, for Captain Vetucchi read it to him. They are to have rooms in the palace, and swords of gold. Two hundred swords of gold for fighting your countrymen—oh, m'sieur, I weep for Alphonse. I shall never see him any more."

"The brave—but he used to be so frightened of guns, Mamie."

"He has not changed, M'sieur Robaire. It is the blue tunic; if there had been no blue tunic he would not go to the wars. I cry all day for thinking of it. He will go to the king's court, and there will be other women there. And he will be so ill on the ship, m'sieur!"

"M'sieur" lighted a cigarette and began to enjoy himself very much. His well-beloved Paris was herself, after all. Where else in all the world could he have found Mamie weeping for the blue tunic which Alphonse must wear? He would see that tunic before he quitted the city.

"Come, Mamie, tears won't help us. Tell me a little more about it! Who is the fellow who is to command this brave army, do you say?"

"Captain Vetucchi, m'sieur. A big man with whiskers, and oh, such a beautiful voice! The ladies of Paris give him the money—thousands of francs—for the poor black men in Asia—no, Africa, as m'sieur says.

He is an Italian, and he came to us from London in the Spring."

"Oh, from London. I am interested, Mamie. Where could I see your captain?"

"He dines at the Café Robespierre every day, m'sieur."

"We shall dine there to-night, you and I."

Mamie's eyes shone with the delight of it.

"And you will save Alphonse, m'sieur? How glad you make me. If it was not for the blue tunic—but m'sieur knows. I think of Alphonse when the guns go off, and I say: 'What will the poor fellow do when he cannot lay his head in my lap, as he used to do?' It is terrible. Ah, you will save him, m'sieur?"

"Who knows, Mamie? Let me have some breakfast and think about it. Where does your army drill, petite?—you do not tell me that."

"In the Hall of Liberty, next door to the Northern Cemetery. Alphonse will be there to-morrow night. He will take his rifle, and how afraid I am! But you will save him, m'sieur; you will save your country!"

Robert Hill smiled grimly, and told Mamie that he feared the task was beyond him. But he ate a very good breakfast notwithstanding, and spent the afternoon among his old haunts, just for all the world as if there had been no army in Paris ready to assist "King Krtiger," and no Mamie to weep for an Alphonse in a blue tunic.

Two hundred men going out from Paris, in blue tunics, to the war in South Africa! The idea amused him vastly. It was so thoroughly French. He fell to speculating whether the valiants would ever get to Marseilles, or, getting there, would find the money to come home again. Little Mamie was quite sure about the money. He himself was quite sure, too, when he saw Captain Vetucchi dining in the Café Robespierre that night. Thousands of francs for the poor black men! He doubted if the half of a franc would be left for them by the time the gallant Italian had ceased to drink bisque soup and to

eat caneton à la Monte Carlo. A libel it was, perchance, upon a worthy man; but report spoke of the Captain less reverently. It called him an adventurer with many aliases. "Monsieur Robaire" learned the aliases off by heart, and then went to bed. This Paris was very kind to him. He dreamed that he routed two hundred French infantrymen with a copy of a comic paper.

"So your Hall of Liberty has a gallery, Mamie?" he said, next morning, when Madame Rabon's pretty daughter served him his breakfast. "Do you think that you could take an old friend there to see Alphonse in his blue tunic?"

Mamie looked very much astonished.

"How, m'sieur, you have been to the Salle?"

"I have been there, Mamie. Let us preserve a discreet confidence. I am going there again, to-night."

"Oh, but, m'sieur, they would kill you if they knew."

"They will know, Mamie, and they will not kill me. There is a password, of course, and Alphonse has it. Bring it to me this afternoon, and I will promise you to keep him from the wars."

Mamie clasped her hands in an ecstasy of delight.

"Oh, Monsieur Robaire, the word is 'L'Afrique.' Alphonse is so proud of it that he makes us ask for it even here in this house. Say 'L'Afrique,' and they will think you are a friend. But you are not a friend, m'sieur; you will not go to the wars—"

"Not at present, Mamie; I shall go to Fontainebleau instead. Do you remember our picnics there—old Négrangier and Dordo, and another who was very much in love with you—?"

"There have been so many, m'sieur—ah, what days they were!"

Robert, the phlegmatic, agreed cordially that they were days indeed, and the two being at one upon the point, many amiable reminiscences were exchanged, and an orderly revival of those old customs which Alphonse, perchance, would have

named obsolete and intolerable. "Monsieur Robaire" came to the conclusion that Paris amused him more than ever, and what with visiting one old friend, and lunching with another, and going to the Café Robespierre with a third, and dining across the water with a fourth, he flattered himself that the blood of youth still flowed in his veins, and that, after all, it is not success or failure that counts, but the days when you anticipate the former and decline to hear of the latter. So far he had done nothing in the world, and had only talked about what he meant to do; but he would strike a blow for England that night—a blow, perchance, that should be heard even by the police of the seventeenth *arrondissement* in Paris. At ten o'clock precisely he set out for the Salle de Liberté to put this heroic resolution into practice.

It was a gloomy place, up a dark courtyard at the western side of the cemetery. A gloomy man, who wore a mackintosh (though it did not rain) and smoked a very long cigarette, challenged him in a gloomy voice at the mouth of the alley, and asked him why he went there. He answered that he sought "L'Afrique," and the effect was magical. Two minutes afterward he was in the narthex of the hall, and precisely ten seconds later he had found shelter in an old wooden gallery that spanned the breadth of the dilapidated building. No doubt it was providential the door that gave admittance to the gallery stairs had neither lock nor key; but Robert Hill was an old traveler, and he took from his pocket a travelers' wedge, such as timid people use in strange hotels for fortifying themselves against imaginary thieves and prowling spirits. When he had inserted his wedge below the gallery door, and was quite sure that the door itself would stand much clubbing, he sat down upon a shaky bench and contemplated the striking scene below him. For he had touched the very heart of the conspiracy, and the valiant two hundred (more

or less) were there beneath his very feet.

Many types were to be seen in that heroic assemblage; but the individual in the person of Alphonse, Mamie's lover, he recognized at once, because of the sky blue tunic the fellow wore, and of the black cravat that flowed upon it in negligent abundance. "Monsieur Robaire" was not sure that a black cravat went very well with a sky blue tunic, nor did he admire the smart check trousers in which Monsieur Alphonse's lower limbs were encased; but the felt hat *à la Buffalobeel* was unmistakably magnificent—and, after all, this was the only blue tunic in the room, so something must be allowed to it. For the matter of that, Monsieur Alphonse himself appeared to be taking the world very easily. He sat before an old piano, upon the lid of which there rested some three dozens of oysters and two bottles of beer; and when he was not thundering out the appeal "*aux armes*," he pattered a *café chantant* chorus, wherein you repeated the momentous words "Plon, Plon," *usque ad nauseam*.

Elsewhere in the room the omens were not militant. Half a dozen youths played euchre upon the lid of an empty barrel; a very stout mercenary smoked a very fat cigar, and expressed the opinion that if the English took their ships to Pretoria there would be the devil to pay. In a far corner a lean boy practiced bugle calls upon an old trumpet, to the great satisfaction of two young ladies in smart dresses, who amused themselves by stuffing paper bags up the spout of the trumpet, or by similar evidences of their gaiety of spirit. For the rest, the meeting was heterogeneous, the riff-raff of the ateliers' merry models, geniuses in embryo, penniless fire-eaters who saw their way to a few francs, a scattering of cranks and honest enthusiasts, and the editor of a military paper. Robert Hill, from his place in the gallery, recognized many a comrade of the old days, and restrained himself with difficulty from the common, if noisy, salute which students love to exchange. There

was time for that—and ah! here was the great Captain Vetucchi, the mighty swashbuckler, the redoubtable Italian himself, coming swaggering into the hall. A fine, sordid rascal, to be sure, if all that English papers said about him was true. No wonder that such a man had collected forty thousand francs from the susceptible ladies of Paris. His mustache alone should have been worth ten thousand of them, and his boots the balance.

Captain Vetucchi strode into the hall magnificently; but no one rose to salute him. When, in terrible tones, he had thrice called for silence, someone said: "Bravo, Shoeleather!" and Alphonse went on playing the piano with more vigor than ever. By-and-by twenty men with single-sticks and sword-canes in their hands were persuaded to marshal in line; but proceedings were again interrupted by one youth, who would show to another youth an amazing spear which his father had brought from Abyssinia. "Tie the red, white and blue to the end of it, and there's a lance for you!" said he. Captain Vetucchi roared "Silence in the ranks," whereupon a gentleman, a grammarian, corrected him, and cried out that it should be "in the rank," as there was only one of them. Upon which, Monsieur Alphonse having played the last bar of "Plon, Plon" ten times for an encore, the drill began, and continued for ten minutes with great energy.

"Bravo, the Marquess of Civita Vecchia, how are you, my boy?"

Now this greeting was very familiar, and in no way intended to be insulting; nevertheless, when Captain Vetucchi heard it, and looked up to the gallery whence the voice came, he turned as pale as a sheet (there being nothing paler that he knew of), and, having done as much, he cried, vulgarly, "Who the devil is up there?" He did not know that "Monsieur Robaire," with a copy of *Truth* in his hand, was "up there," and not only "up there," but also enjoying that good memory which re-

called to him the captain's many aliases. Robert Hill would strike a great blow for liberty that night. But first he would strike a light for his pipe.

"If the Baron Faenza will step upstairs, I shall be glad to give him satisfaction," he cried, pleasantly, showing his face over the balustrade.

"Seventy devils!" roared Vetucchi, "there is a spy in the gallery."

"As true as the Count of Abbia, there is a spy in the gallery, my boy. Don't be in a hurry to come up and see him, for the door is locked."

Vetucchi, staggered as by a blow, ran fiercely to the door of the hall. It was locked; double locked and bolted. Someone cried, "*Nous sommes trahis!*" The young gentlemen with the pretty sword-sticks drew their blades from the scabbards and waved them frantically. The youth with the spear in his hand flourished it above his neighbor's head, and gave vent to some astonishing exclamations. Meanwhile, Robert Hill continued to philosophize from the front of the gallery.

"Ha, Lepeletier, it is you, old fellow! Come and sup with me—Café Robespierre. I will give you something better than beer, and I have not forty thousand francs from the ladies of Paris. There is plenty of time, my boy; the police come at eleven, and it is now only half-past ten. Keep your eye on old 'Shoeleather' there. He is going to America to-morrow with your forty thousand francs. And you, Marget, make one of the party. We will talk old times while the police are taking your captain to the 'violin.' On my honor, they come at eleven——"

The philosopher was wise, but those who heard him lacked self-control. Monsieur Alphonse, in his emotion, sat down at the piano and played the march from "Tannhäuser" with great verve. Others continued to cry "*Nous sommes trahis!*" with all their lungs. Lepeletier and Marget and other of the philosopher's friends gathered under the gallery and sustained a coherent conversation with him. Ve-

tucchi, the swashbuckler, alone behaved with indiscretion, running hither and thither in a very wild way, and always appealing to strange gods. None, perhaps, took the thing very seriously until, from the alley without, the voice of the sentry was heard crying, "The Guards! the Guards are coming down the Rue du Montparnasse!"

"As I told you, gentlemen," cried the philosopher, pleasantly, "the Guards are coming down the Rue du Montparnasse. They have just read your unfortunate biography, Count, or Baron, or whatever you are; I sent it to the *Mairie* of the seventeenth *arrondissement*. They propose to come and sup with you. Good night, my boy; permit me to preach economy, and to turn out the gas."

He bowed to them very affably and quitted the gallery, congratulating himself as he did so that he had bribed the doorkeeper, for the ridiculously small sum of fifteen francs, to bolt and bar the doors after Vetucchi's arrival. The threat of police had already sent the outpost to his kennel. Robert Hill, having turned off the gas at the meter, listened from a dark place of the alley to an uproar as of wild beasts in council. Ferocious

cries, the clubbing of the door, the frenzy of oaths, the eternal "Plon, Plon" helped the thunders of riot. When he made the boulevard at last, half a squadron of Republican Guards rode at a canter to the door of the Hall of Liberty.

"Ha!" he said, reflectively, "then Alphonse will not wear a blue tunic, after all. It will be black when he comes out of there. I will go and sup at the Café Robespierre, for I have guests."

An hour later, Lepeletier, at large on bail, and Marget, no more fortunate, were drinking good Bordeaux at the café with him.

"Confess," they cried, "who told you about Vetucchi?"

"The detective who came across from Rio to arrest him; he rode in my carriage from Boulogne."

"The brave—then we have been swindled?"

"You have been swindled, my boy."

"Cursed day! Glory flaps her wings and flies! Pass the bottle, Marget; I will glut in red, red wine."

The philosopher smiled.

"They will fine you a hundred francs to-morrow," said he.

THE FRUIT STAND ITALIAN

CLOSE to the highway corner all the day
 He lingers in the sunniest of moods,
 While from the pear he flicks the fly away,
 And o'er the gold banana fondly broods;
 Preoccupied, he breathes upon the plum
 And rubs it on his sleeve to make it shine,
 And smokes his pipe and finds of joy the sum
 While dreaming of green hills beyond the brine.

And then he turns, with spirit rapture-stoled,
 The roaster's crank, and fancies that he grinds
 "Somnambula" in Naples, as of old;
 And as that merry crank he winds and winds,
 He jumps, and in his ecstasy insane
 Dreams he's the monkey dancing on the chain.

R. K. MUNKITTRICK.

IN THE DAYS OF JACKMAN

By John Regnault Ellyson

THEN the poet assumed one of his beautiful attitudes and spoke in a somewhat drawing monotone:

You have given me pleasure in what you have been saying about Mademoiselle Julianne Valarie, and by way of quitting scores I am going to add some facts that are more or less peculiar—facts that if carelessly spread abroad might mar my fame among the more fastidious; be discreet, therefore, I beg you. There must be no sensation, gentlemen, no scandal. Just another point, too, I shall be glad if you will remember. Mademoiselle took pity on me and gave me aid, and led me into new paths at the unluckiest period of my career, and so I owe her a debt of profound gratitude.

She owes me something, also; she borrowed the name she now bears—the name I bestowed on the nymph to whom I dedicated my "Lyric Idolatries." Previously she had been called Meg, simply, and how she had come by it does not matter. The truth is, she had flowered among the flagstones; she had no history; so far as I am aware she had no kin, or, at least, none of whom she boasted. I believe there are stories afloat, clever and charming stories, stories filled with the details of her young life; but I can only say of them that, in the main, they are pretty stories ingeniously told by one who loved her in after-years.

But then, as now, Meg numbered her friends by legions. She was widely known in that crumbling quarter of Andova where the houses were

wofully antiquated, where the alleys were crooked and the streets narrow, where churls and scapegraces and many knaves abided, and some fairly honest, serene good citizens; they lived there cheaply and died quickly, if at all—indeed, they rose or fell, grew old, changed guise or vanished, but rarely died; and when they did pass away, the ceremony over them was hardly worth the candle, it was so exceedingly brief.

I can commend that end of the world, for I once lodged there with Laurey, my companion, who had talents and worked in two veins. It was he who wrote fiction and painted pictures, and it was I who made verses. But we did not flourish; we nested in a garret, like beggarly dreamers, with nothing above us but the shingles and the clouds.

Meg had a corner somewhere in the same house. She and I were not on friendly terms in those days; we nodded as we passed and seldom spoke. She did not please me. What I saw of her, however, and the things I heard, aroused my curiosity. In Winter and in Autumn she hung around Madame Duvet's shop and served that lady's lean Italian cavalier and peddled his droll figures and saintly images in plaster; but, when mid-Spring came, she shook off service altogether and disported or took ease by turns; she spun yarns for the idlers and bantered the gossips, gamed with the brats on the doorsteps, mimicked the fakir or the dancer on the boxes in the alley, or, couching like a sphinx, but with her chin between her palms, she dozed on the fresh sward under the trees in Falcon Square.

You fancy she was by no means a very dainty girl. Perhaps so. She took indifferent care of her person, I thought, and went forth with a bold air, slipshod usually and much bepatched. She looked quite another creature on festal days, but she seemed scarcely improved in appearance because she arrayed herself then in a fashion so barbaric. At such times I was more than ever amazed at the sight of her, and more shocked, and yet I could admire her fine teeth and her singular eyes—long-lidded, deep-green eyes, in which lurked something of conquest.

Certainly she was not the least curious of an odd type. She was hardy and adventurous and roguish, unschooled yet clever. She got ideas from the street singers, from the chatter of the market-place, from the sayings of perverse comrades; and she missed nothing piquant. But you must know it was chiefly in the house of comedy that she gathered her phrases and brightened her wits. Twice a week, if not oftener, she sat in the dime-loft of the theatre, where she imbibed the comic sentiment and applauded the actors. Frequently she kept up the farce while the curtain was down and picked to pieces the blooming dames of the balcony. She cajoled the ruffian gallants and ogled the jail-birds, but there! that was as far as it went—mere gammon and the play of eyes—for all knew so well the sudden feline caprices of the girl and the cost of a false stroke or a brush against the grain. Truly there was never a sharper tongue between whiter teeth! She could outwangle a shrew or match a trooper in the matter of round oaths. And when a conflict ensued, it was worse. On provocation, indeed, she wrestled like a young athlete and, pushed to the pinch, she bit and scratched like the puma! Yes, it is true, gentlemen—and in due time these and other gifts made her the boast of the street, the pet of the galleries.

But then, too, she had ambition. She was unabashed by distances and undaunted by the heights, as she

proved, this child of Beelzebub, when she mounted into our attic—her very first notable rise in the world! It was no affair of mine, I assure you, and none could have deplored more sincerely than I the mistake that Laurey made in my absence.

You see, one morning I set out for Nudeburg, and after two days in town I found an old person of repute, who, eager for novelties in verse, gave me welcome and received my "Lyric Idolatries" with flattering promises. Now, it took me five days to walk there and five days to walk back—a long journey, undoubtedly, but, I thank heaven, not so monotonous as you may suppose: you must reckon on the buoyancy of my spirits and the charms of Springtide.

Laurey met me at the door on the evening of my return. His cheeks were flushed, and I observed a strange agitation in his manner. He wished to say something, it seemed, not so easily said. As my friend in unguarded moments threw away a little at hazard, I thought I had a notion of what had happened.

"Tell me now," said I, "what have you lost?"

He drew up his slim figure and lifted his head haughtily.

"Why, I have lost nothing; indeed, on the contrary, I have found a treasure."

"A treasure?"

"A jewel!"

"And where, pray?" I asked.

"Here," said he; "right here!"

And in saying this he smote the floor with his heel. I could not catch his meaning. I glanced down, and my gaze lingered for a moment on Laurey's blue velvet slippers, once so gay with embroidered flowers, so grievously frayed now and worn, and I smiled at seeing so much swaggering pride in my poor friend's modest slippers. However, he did not cast off his grand air, but, taking me by the arm, he turned and paused in front of the new canvas on the easel.

"Look, and tell me what you think of this."

The picture, I own, surprised me

extremely. It was the head of laughing Bacchante, well conceived and finely executed. I had no doubts about the work; I recognized Laurey's dashing brush-marks and I recognized, besides, the splendid teeth and the eyes of the picture; but I wondered where my friend had found the rest of the features and the unsmirched flesh-tints.

"I confess I am amazed . . ."

"Confess, too, another thing; confess you've led me by a string," said he. "Isn't it so?—you've moved around in your circle, in your mystical, vaporish sphere, and blotted out the world with your shadow—in brief, you've gone about with your nose in the clouds and I've followed you blindly! Yes, and the blame lies with you that the girl almost escaped us! You!—ah, my friend! . . . But the day after you left she came—came and sat here and prattled and amused me. And I noted her profile, the level brows, the set of the head—yet I scarcely realized my luck at first; but afterward—and all at once . . . what was it, if it wasn't inspiration? I fetched here water in the bowl and plied my soap and sponge and washed her face. Bless me, how she laughed and danced!—and, when the marvel was wrought, she looked so devilishly adorable that I kissed her, and then I painted the face—as you see it there—clean as a new coin, fresh as a bud! . . ."

Now, all these absurdities greatly displeased me, and I laid my hand upon Laurey's shoulder, saying seriously:

"This begins badly, and you'll end by being bitten!"

"No, no—she's in love with me!"

"Indeed!—then so much the worse!"

"Why?"

"Laurey, I protest; this is not art!"

"Nonsense!—I'll show you—I'll paint her as Venus!"

"What—a mere child?"

"She's fifteen, at least . . ."

"And shaped like a bundle of rags!"

"Ah, my dear friend! . . . but you shall see!"

"I have seen enough," I answered, as I turned on my heel.

"You are not yourself, or I should reason with you."

"You are quite yourself," I retorted; "as ever, a great fool!"

And here we parted; he went his way and I went mine.

At night we lay in bed side by side, both mute—I, sore of limb, wakeful and sullen; he, cool and serene, sleeping like one of the just. Half the night passed before I fell into a deep slumber lasting for many hours. When I awoke, Laurey was sitting by me; he had prepared the breakfast. I was famished. I believe I consumed most of my mate's share as well as my own, and while I ate he questioned me concerning the success of my trip and the incidents along the route.

But neither of us could forget the scene of the previous day. I absented myself a good deal for the next few weeks, frequenting the hills and fields around Andova. In the evenings Laurey and I were thrown together and, though we did not renew the subject, we pecked at one another and bickered, getting sometimes into warm words over the merest trifles. Still, on these occasions, when the girl was present, there was no danger of grave issues. Meg was never serious. She made light of everything, mocked us with her waggish looks and antics and rallied us with her drolleries. The vixen had somehow the queer art of filling the room with her figure.

And, indeed, whatever else may be said, she was a fine bit of anatomy at this period—nimble on her feet, lithe, yet vigorous, supple-jointed and shapely. She not only caught the eye, but she gave us the trouble of keeping pace with her spirits; she was free as the wind, sportive and jolly, boastful and audacious. The vagabond! she was thoroughly untamed, but seldom bad-tempered, unless aroused, and then unvanquishable. I admit that she was charming at times; that she was comely to look on; that she poised herself and moved with the ease and the natural grace of the cat or the greyhound. I admit

all this now, but no man could then have wrung the confession from me.

I was always thinking of Laurey, in fact, and trembling for our future. He wrote nothing; he painted, and the Venus alone sprang up under the touches of his brush. Day by day I grew more unnerved and more petulant, seeing how we drifted and how our petty funds dwindled. And then—then came tidings that my publisher had failed. I was miserable enough, and yet in a measure I soothed myself with the reflection that, as I knew my friend's destiny and the fate of my poems, I should now at least have nothing in the nature of the unforeseen to shatter and confound me. But in this, too, I was deceived.

I shall spare your feelings, however, and tell you of it briefly. I slumbered late one morning, and when I awoke I felt something between my fingers, something which I lifted drowsily. It was one of Meg's flimsy trinkets—a purse no bigger than my thumb, woven of yellow floss and dark brown hair. There was a gold piece inside, and outside, at the clasp, a slip of paper—a scrawl of two lines, the sight of which at once aroused me. I read again and again the two lines from Laurey—I read them until my lids burned and my eyes dimmed: "God bless you, old boy," so ran the words, "God bless you, and good-bye!"

The days that followed were not palmy days. I kept at the girdle of my Muse and got entangled. I changed my abode often, but I remained in Andova. I struggled for my old poems, and gathered experience and spun new verses and fed lightly and drank freely of the fresh air—and suffered. And then, because I had no other choice, I dipped into journalism and led a sorry life under many masters, but meanwhile, certainly, I ate at less irregular intervals and I slept well.

About the end of June, just two years after my friend's flight, the *Evening Globe*, on which I served,

collapsed, and from the wreck of it I did not secure anything except a ticket to Jackman's Great Show. To speak seriously, gentlemen, I was very much embarrassed. The state in which I found myself may be likened to that of my little "Giuliano's Spirit"—the shy poor spirit, if you recollect, too suddenly set free, peeled clean of flesh, numbed and chilled even in the hot noontide, full of a sense of ghostliness, yet fearful of all ill winds that might arise. My pride sustained me, however, or I should have fled and moaned in secret. I strolled along the streets, met with acquaintances, chatted of affairs and here and there I warmed myself in the sun before Jackman's flaming placards.

They say I am rather fond of shows, and it may be true, but I tell you, on that day my blood was thin and I sickened at the thought of such vain mockeries. Twice in the course of my morning walk it happened I quite unconsciously drew near Jackman's white pavilions; once I turned away, but the second time I remembered my ticket and, that I might not lose the value of it, I went in and attended the afternoon performance.

At the grand entrance, across from the blare of trumpets and the noise of cymbals, I sat and watched the clowns, the tumblers and the fine riders. The magic twilight, the scent of the trampled sawdust, the glimpses of the happy faces about me, brought back the memories of days gone by. The music, the bustle, the huzzas of the crowd, quickened my languid pulse and warmed my veins, and when a couple of the shapeliest women I have ever seen went through a series of rare feats on the trapeze, I rejoiced at their triumph and joined heartily in the applause.

After this I had the courage to light my last cigar. At the same moment, as somebody touched my sleeve, I turned and discovered a little below me one of the beauties of the trapeze wrapped in a long soft mantle that fell close in dark folds about her rounded limbs. She smiled, and I

recognized the bright teeth and the deep-green eyes of Laurey's goddess. At her side stood a jockey in jonquil-colored morocco boots, white trousers, silk blouse and cap. The fellow had a pointed beard and an air that was foreign yet familiar. I glanced at him again; it was Laurey.

I leaped to the ground, and in an instant I was drawn out of the path of the jostling attendants, beyond the curtain, into an alcove of fluttering canvas. And here both of them embraced me, caressing me like a child and saying many fair things. It was all so delightful, so foolish; the tones fell faint and sweet; they questioned me, but I could not answer, I am so easily undone at times. My cheeks were now wet, and I could only look from one to the other and feast my soul on those two handsome faces.

And when I spoke, what did I say?

"Oh, you dapperling-knave! you gypsy-popinjay!" said I; "and so you have thrown your talents to the dogs for these gay eyes!"

Laurey shook his head.

"No, no," said he, "I exercise my talents."

"Ah!"

"As a romancer——"

"Indeed!"

"And as an artist."

"Impossible!"

"Quite true, nevertheless."

"Quite true," echoed Mademoiselle Valarie.

"Do understand me, my dear boy. You see, I compose all of Jackman's splendid manifestoes, and I design all

of his exceedingly unique posters. And, thanks to the lady's talents and mine, we have no fast-days in our calendar."

"We will prove that," interposed mademoiselle, "if you will but dine with us. You won't refuse?"

"I dare not."

"Good! But tell me," said Laurey; "you still make verses?"

"Yes, oh, yes," said I, and my voice wavered.

"Perhaps, not in the best luck?"

"I am yet on my legs, you see."

"But why not on the wing, like the born singers, like the birds?" demanded Mademoiselle Valarie.

I made no answer, and she, drooping her brow, regarded the turn of my figure again and the poverty of my outfit, and when she raised her lashes her eyes were full of brimming lights.

"Come," said she; "do you write jolly songs now?"

"Sometimes."

"And would you take office, say at a trifling twelve hundred a year?"

"At twelve hundred a year! Are you jesting or am I dreaming?"

"You accept?"

I nodded and took her hand in mine.

"There! and now leave everything else to me. I promise you shall see life, make friends, live well and yet win fame!"

"But how—how can all this be done?"

"Why, easily; as Poet-Laureate to the Prince of Showmen!"



NOT WASTED

MOTHER—Cynthia, my dear, I would rather not have you see that play. It isn't fit for anyone to see.

DAUGHTER—But, mamma, I already have the tickets.

MOTHER (*sternly*)—Give them to me!

ON HER BIRTHDAY

CUPID, stern, imperious, bids me write to greet her,
And for once be serious in elegiac metre..

What's the use of keeping feelings on the quiet—
Pale from lack of sleeping, thin from slender diet?

Truant thoughts are thronging ever from their duty—
Ever am I longing, dazzled by her beauty

From her dainty leather, to the hat above her—
(I'm so shy I'd never dare confess I ~~do~~—

*For the life of me, I can't
think of any rhyme here!*

In the lines I drop her, shall I say what's nearest?
Would it be just proper if I called her ~~dear~~—

*Dear me! I'm completely at
a loss for phrases!*

I would quit this versin' if my heart were stouter—
Tell it all in person, with my arm ~~up~~—

*Where in thunder is that rhyming
dictionary of mine?*

Cupid's shot his arrow; Cupid never misses!
Is this page too narrow for a dozen ~~feet~~—

*Good gracious! It is certainly time
I stopped this rhyming business.*

BURGES JOHNSON.



AN INTERESTING LADY

THIS, ladies and gentlemen," said the dime-museum lecturer, in tones admirably suited for declamatory purposes, "is the female of whom you have all heard times without number, the cause of so much trouble, the mainspring of so many scandals, the person so often and eagerly sought for by lynx-eyed sleuths—"

He pointed an indicatory finger at the large glass-fronted cabinet wherein reposed the petrified lady.

"—the woman in the case."

THE SMART SET AND THE STAGE

By Clement Scott

THE Smart Set of London has for the last ten or fifteen years, as I can testify, been the chief influence, the prominent guide and counsellor, the motive power for good or ill, of our English playwrights, plays and players. In old times, when I venture to think that dramatic art was in a sounder and healthier condition in England than it is to-day, the impanelled jury sat in the pit, a jury composed mainly of sensible, unprejudiced, middle-class citizens with no particular fads to air, but sworn to deal out justice, sometimes stern and relentless, and often as not tempered with mercy. These were the men who judged Edmund Kean, Macready and Phelps. It is historic—"The Pit rose at me!" What did these giants care about the Boxes?

They hissed in those days in a theatre as much as they applauded. But the public would stand no nonsense. The manager of a theatre was the servant, not the master, of the public. It would have been as much as his life and career were worth to come forward, with folded arms and insolent air, making frothy or windbag speeches, giving his utterly uninteresting and unnecessary views on this, that or the other thing, and telling his audience what they should like or dislike, what they should do or not do.

The old-time manager offered his grateful thanks or apologies, then simply bowed and retired.

But *tempora mutantur*; we have changed all that. To-day the impanelled jury comes from the Smart Set, and is mainly composed of women who wish to make themselves notorious in a self-advertising and notori-

ously vulgar age. The citizens have made way for the diamond-bedecked dowagers and fast women with extra décolleté gowns and a plentiful supply of society slang issuing from their carmined lips—grown up married and unmarried women who talk infantile babble that would disgrace a middle-class nursery, and that they actually force into our playwrights' mouths. Listen to a specimen of it overheard at a fashionable "squash:"

"How do you like my new gown, dearest?"

"Oh, it's too deevie (divine) for words. Was it dreadfully expie (expensive)?"

"No, my twee (sweet), it wasn't. Why don't you order one for Lady Clattermag's ball in pinkie (pink) instead of blue?"

"I will. I'll send Madame Chose a tellie (telegram) to make me one. It will be awfully diskie (disgusting) if she can't do it!"

Conceive this dreadful drivel being encouraged by the grand jury of dramatic art, which has forced, literally forced, the degenerate and decadent drama on a patient and often contemptuous public, until it sulkily retired to music halls and variety theatres, sick to death of the assertive ascendancy of Society!

This Smart Set in London has enmeshed in its golden net all the potent factors of a sound, intelligent, honest and rational drama. The Smart Set gets its seats at the theatre for nothing, and, as a *quid pro quo*, intrigues in Court circles for dramatic knight-hoods and gives a sop in the pan to toadying managers by cards for at-homes, dinners, breakfasts, afternoon

teas, crushes and kettledrums, expecting at the same time a heavy percentage of hard work and toil for this privilege of aristocratic condescension. For when my Lady Snob desires to get up a dramatic entertainment for a church, or a hospital, or a crèche, or has some other wild scheme for a charity boom, the fashionable actor and actress who spend so much time to so little advantage in the "halls of dazzling light," and who accept the snubbing in crushes and country houses in part payment for "favours gratefully received," are compelled not only to give their services free, but to force their subordinates to follow at their heels in the administration of second-hand charity by proxy.

It is because I see—at present "through a glass darkly"—this Smart Set dramatic patronage creeping into free and independent America; it is because a very wholesome line of demarcation is becoming looser and looser as the years advance, that I venture to say a few words on the subject in the direct interest of a beautiful art that can almost make or mar a people.

There is no art in the world that can exist without the patronage of the wealthy. We all know that. Where would our painters be without their patrons, who, if they sometimes know next to nothing about art in the first instance, end by doing an immensity of good, as they have done, from time immemorial, to the greatest artists that the world has produced, from Michael Angelo down to the geniuses of the present day.

I once heard a double-millionaire American declare at a dinner-table that all imaginative and poetically minded men should be locked up in a lunatic asylum. In the next breath he told us that he had one of the finest collections of Corot's pictures in the world. So you see art of the highest did not suffer at his hands, notwithstanding his sentiments regarding the "insanity of genius." He had many valuable specimens of the most sensitive impressionists in the world locked up in *his* lunatic asylum.

It is the same with music. We all know what patronage of the most exalted kind has done for this divine art, this "heavenly maid." Why, a few years ago opera was threatened almost with extinction in England. An impresario could not be found who would undertake the unaided responsibility of reëstablishing it. Who saved the situation? The Smart Set, composed of men and women who really loved and appreciated an art whose purity has been seldom assailed. These men and women of the highest birth and breeding did not defile the fair garment of music. They did not turn our opera house into an aristocratic music hall, but they brought to the front all the musical genius of to-day to contrast it with the admitted glory of yesterday. These high-minded and high-souled men and women, faithful to the art beloved by the best Queen and the best Princess ever worshipped and adored by a nation, by their own personal endeavor and energy obtained a subsidy for the art of music.

I may be wrong, but I have never believed in State-aided art of any kind. I think it would be as unsuccessful in England as in America. But I do sincerely believe in art patronage of a high, noble and unselfish kind. A State-aided theatre in London would in all probability get into the hands of some "faddist" not in touch with public taste, and in the end the public funds would be found to be supporting incompetent dramatists, and the institution be a last asylum for the lame and broken-kneed actor.

Two of the greatest artists in my time of the Comédie Française, the oldest State-aided theatre in the world, have broken away from their allegiance to the house of Molière. I allude, of course, to Sara Bernhardt and Coquelin the elder. In the old days Rostand would have been the idol of the house now so unfortunately destroyed, and his exquisite verse would have been declaimed not only by the accomplished mistress and master of fiction, but by a com-

pany specially trained in *l'art de dire*.

But is it not strange and most wonderful and "out of all whooping" that this same Smart Set, which can be proved to have done so much for other serious arts, should, comparatively speaking, break down at the dramatic art by encouraging feeble plays and, as a rule, feather-brained and dilettante players? Some of my friends are apt to ridicule the commercial aspect of the theatre, but I really believe that the hard-headed, observant man of commerce is a far better friend to the art-loving playgoer, and that he gives him far better plays and the opportunity of seeing finer acting than the social guild that has been elected somehow or other to serve on the grand jury in England.

When plays are constantly and continuously written and produced, not on account of their intrinsic value, but because they tickle the fancy of frivolous fashionable society; when actors are worshipped by the babblers of "deevie" and "diskie," not for their talent, but for their pushing persistency and amiable eccentricity; when actresses who are little better than raw amateurs are elevated to the highest position in their art, not because they can act one little bit, not because they have been trained in any school, not because they understand how to speak or use the voice, for they may have no more expression than a little mouse behind a wainscot, but because they are so pretty, or so nice, or so sweet, or wear their gowns so well and are so popular with the Smart Set, to the exclusion of women of genius and talent, then there must indeed be something "rotten in the State of Denmark!"

I will now give you a description of a scene that constantly occurs in London on the occasion of the first night of a new play, which is still a great function in Society. The like never occurs in America, and I earnestly hope it never will, for in a thousand ways it is detrimental to art and fetters public opinion, which should be the life and breath of any art.

We will suppose that the theatre is managed by someone who is extremely popular with the Smart Set, a man who is welcomed by them and subsequently used by them according to the customary plan. The author of the play is in nine cases out of ten a delightful fellow and *persona grata* with all the people against whose shoulders he rubs in aristocratic houses and at the best clubs.

The audience is mainly composed of "deadheads"—that is to say, of invited guests who never dream of paying. The middle classes in pit, gallery and upper circles pay, of course, but the stalls and boxes are, according to some unwritten law, allotted to old friends—first nighters, habitués and patrons—all belonging to the Smart Set.

The courteous and grateful manager, who loves to see a fashionably dressed and friendly audience—how could he possibly be expected to ask payment on such an occasion from those who have entertained him and courted him in their own houses? He is only too delighted to see his dear, warm-hearted friends in front. "It would not have been like old times if they had not been there," and so on, and so on. You know the blandly courteous manager.

But the courtesy does not end there.

Now a stranger from America or elsewhere, if he were wandering about the lobbies between the acts, would constantly hear these words:

"Are you going round to the back to-night?"

"Well, I suppose I must. He would take it as a bad compliment if I did not go."

"But do you like the play? Seriously?"

There is often no reply to this but a knowing wink or a shrug of the shoulders. There is much meaning in either.

The American visitor may also have observed that between the acts the attendants or ushers have been handing round invitations to what may be called a dramatic first night "free lunch."

At the close of the performance an elegantly dressed acting manager with unimpeachable manners will be found, hat in hand, bowing the invited guests to a banquet spread upon the stage; not by any means a stage banquet of property food, with golden goblets containing nothing, but something very substantial, satisfying and palatable—"chicken and champagne" with a vengeance.

That entertainment was, once upon a time, supposed to be the managerial feast for dramatic critics, but they—poor wretches!—have gone out of fashion. Chicken and champagne now constitute the ambrosia and nectar of the Smart Set!

To those who offer the obvious and stereotyped remark, "What business is it of anyone not concerned in the matter what a manager does on his own stage or how he entertains his guests?" there are only a few words that start instinctively to the lips; they are—Good taste! and Influence!

I have compared the Smart Set to a jury of experts. Well, is it extravagant to say that if, before delivering its verdict, the jury is taken out to feast on chicken and champagne when a play or player is on trial, I would not give much for the value or weight of the decision of that jury? It is hard enough for a critic to give his free, frank and unbiased judgment on a play in which countless friends and comrades may be interested, but his task is the harder when he is outflanked by the frivolous set sitting in the jury box. Under such circumstances it is ridiculous to say to the critic, "You, my dear sir, are the judge; the verdict is yours and yours alone."

How can he, loving the art as he does and with the best intentions in the world, stand up against an influence deliberately procured, not to advance, but to stifle public opinion? The critic that takes the side of those honest people in the pit who used to be impanelled on the jury cannot make headway against an influence that permeates society and animates the kindlier hearted of the gilded

crowd, to the ultimate detriment of a profession that nowadays suspiciously resembles a trade more than an art.

I have fought all my life not for the namby-pamby, bread-and-butter, skimmed-milk drama, but for the drama of the home affections, the drama of wholesome sentiment, the drama of humanity, the drama that sends men and women home happy, and not miserable and ashamed. I know that my "pastors and masters" encouraged me. I feel convinced that the public, however I failed, never deserted me. But the trial came when the jury was impanelled of the fashionable idlers who carried the appeal for bad art up to the very ante-chamber of the Court and to the ears of those whose omnipotence is recognizable but not always judicious!

America has recently been startled and, naturally enough, somewhat shocked by a series of plays imported to this country mainly from England and France. Believe me, they are not necessarily immoral, but they may, one and all, be made distasteful by a process of art that does not commend itself to the refined mind or the conscientious artist.

The French dramatist displays positive genius in what I may call playing with fire, but then the French dramatist is artistic by nature and would not encourage exponents of his work who were not in complete harmony with his idea.

I cannot for the life of me see anything immoral, or degrading, or polluting in the style of farce that is not exactly a Sunday-school essay, but still in its course leaves on the mind the impression of things not objectionable and base and vile, but of topsy-turvyness and humor. France and Germany combined have given to the English-speaking stage some of the best farces, and provided us with the heartiest laughter that the English and the American public have enjoyed during their whole theatrical experience. To lump them all together as prurient or immoral or disgraceful, and calling for the attention of the

police, is to my mind the height of absurdity. Some very earnest lovers of the drama contend that all systems of censorship are objectionable and to be deprecated, but the worst system of censorship of all, where art is concerned, is a police urged to action by a fanatical section of Society.

Two men during the last thirty years have been prominent in America and England in popularizing the German and French farce. They are Augustin Daly and Charles Wyndham. Augustin Daly's crusade for all that was pure, dignified and noble in art is historical in America. Charles Wyndham's heroics and tirades in the cause of virtue, publicly and oratorically delivered, are as eloquent as those of his gifted predecessor, M. Tartuffe!

Turn a moment to "*Sapho*," about which play so much nonsense has been written. There is nothing immoral in Daudet's story as written by him. There is nothing immoral in the French play founded on "*Sapho*" when acted by such a true artist as Madame Réjane.

Daudet's book, according to his own dedication, was not intended for the edification of school-girls. In fact, he asked his sons not to read it before they arrived at the age of maturity. It was at once a piece of literature and a warning to the thoughtless and reckless young. In brilliant and fascinating style the author drew for the example of youth a picture of a woman whose influence can deprave and ruin body and soul, as surely as disease can bring strong men to infirmity and the grave.

I do not myself think—and here I am in discord with Zola, Ibsen, Daudet, Tolstoi and other great writers—that such subjects as these are suitable for dramatic treatment on the stage. If it is to be a healthy stage it should give them a wide berth. Art has nothing to do with the ugly and revolting. The theatre is not a dissecting-room. I have seen Zola's "*Nana*," Ibsen's "*Ghosts*" and Daudet's "*Sapho*," and I wish they had all remained on the shelves

of a library, and not been flaunted before our faces in the playhouse.

We all know—every man of the world knows—that such women as *Nana* and *Sapho* exist, but we do not want to see and consume their corruption. They are loathsome women!

For what is *Sapho*? A woman nauseated with vice in its most ingenious and artistic forms, the kind of woman who destroyed Greece, Rome, Pompeii and Herculaneum in their triumphs of civilization. In her flaunting, brazen, impudent manner, she tells us that she has inspired artists not with her mind, but with her body, to create works of genius. Poets, artists, sculptors, painters have become swine in the sty of this Circe. She has come to the end of her tether, and with her "All that can be has been done," as Swinburne observes. She is old enough to know better, and her last infatuated craze, at the age of forty or more, is to pour the last dregs of her polluted and polluting love on a young, innocent boy, for whom she has conceived the worst and most unholy passion of her life. This is the degraded and sickening creature against whom and against whose manner of life Daudet warns boys who are innocent of the dangers through which they will have to pass.

The book, I grant, is artistic; the play, even when acted by an artist like Réjane, is not the most delightful thing on which man or woman can look. It has certainly no right in a theatre that calls to its doors men and women and boys and girls of every age and class.

But, unfortunately, the character seems good to an English actress who has acquired notoriety by coquetting with the most dangerous form of realism for the purpose of tickling the palates of the idle born, hungry for a new sensation. The Smart Set that, sitting in the jury box of art, had encouraged to the utmost extent of its power every form of the decadent and degenerate drama, that had sent our best and most brilliant dramatists away like lost sheep into the wilder-

ness of uncertainty, was surely ripe for *Sapho* in all her aggressive realism.

America was led into a trap. America had helped to make a fortune out of the "*Carmen* kiss" and the crudities of a realistic *Camille*, and so America was apparently the field for the new *Sapho*, boomed into existence and flaunted in good citizens' faces on account of an immorality that was utterly unnecessary. It was a case of "trying it on the dog" that had proved faithful before.

London had not tolerated the "*Carmen* kiss" for forty-eight hours. That bold experiment was never repeated. But London changes with circumstance, and there was just a chance that *Sapho*, applauded in America, would edge her way into London somehow by means of bold advertisement, effrontery and the silent encouragement of the Smart Set. Herein lies a very formidable and salutary warning.

In America there is no censorship, and, if I mistake not, the police cen-

sorship of literature is not dear to the cultivated American mind. But the Smart Set of America, committed as yet to no policy, has before it a great and important task that will commend itself to all good citizens. This Smart Set, unbiased as yet by the facile fascination of actors or the cajoling coquetry of actresses, largely consisting, as it does, of educated, appreciative, brilliant women, who can talk, and talk well, on almost every subject; that does not drivel with baby babble and idiotic slang, can yet save the American stage from the reproach of plays of this pattern and literature of this unseemliness.

I am earnest in my belief that this great and gracious task will be promptly accomplished. There will be no more need for police, or arrests, or magisterial inquisitions.

The Smart Set of America will be the grand jury to which such cases will be submitted in all good faith, and from whose decision it will not be necessary to appeal.



A FAMILIAR STORY

WE tied our barques, in the misty past,
Together, and sailed away
On the tide of youth that was flowing fast
To the Island of Happy Day.

And we tarried there till the sea god lured
Us over the sea to him,
And we sailed through shoals till our barques were moored
In the Sea of the Social Swim.

We tossed and fretted, and ne'er content,
Again our sails were set,
And we skimmed along through the fog, and went
Aground in the Straits of Debt.

On the shore of the Land Regret we stand
As the stately ships go by,
But no one answers the beckoning hand,
And vain is our helpless cry.

In the light of the sun that is setting fast
On the wreck of our social sin,
As a dream we see, through the misty past,
The Land of the Might-Have-Been.

TOM MASSON.

THE DECISION OF THE DOG

By Richard Stillman Powell

I

"HAPPINESS," said Betty, "is——"
"Surcease from dyspepsia," quoth I.

"—having a duty in life, and doing it."

"True; and I'm very happy."

Betty sniffed.

"Do you believe that you are doing your duty?"

"Sure of it! Am I not here?"

"And does your duty lead you here at ten every morning and keep you stretched out on the couch until lunch time? Is *that* your idea of duty?"

"My duty in life is to keep watch and guard over you, Betty; to see that your inexperienced years are not taken advantage of, that your young affections are not stolen, and to——"

"Thank you not at all," cried Betty.

"My inexperienced affections——"

"Years, Betty."

"—are in not the slightest danger!"

"Not when I am by."

"No, *indeed!*"

Betty smiled exasperatingly.

"To keep my eye on the others," I added, with dignity.

"Well," said Betty, "you will soon have to open your eyes wider than they are now, if that is the case."

"Someone is coming?" I asked, with admirable calmness.

"Mr. Burns is at this moment entering the gate."

I raised my head so that I could see over the porch railing. The attitude was uncomfortable, but duty and discomfort are not only alliterative but synonymous.

"Burns," I said, disagreeably; "he ought to be put out. A—ah!" I drew a deep breath of joy. "It's rum to rock candy he'll try to vault the tennis net! And if he does——!"

The silence of suspense fell over the porch. The vines rustled excitedly, and Mug slapped his tail against the floor, intimating that although seemingly asleep he was in reality wide awake to the portentous moment. Then Betty blushed, the tennis net sagged in the middle and acted strangely, and I dropped my head behind the railing. Mug slowly arose and, viewing the scene on the lawn, barked once in disapprobation and went to sleep again.

"He's—he's so—so impetuous, Betty!" I gurgled from beneath a scratchy Japanese cushion.

Betty sniffed again.

"Aren't you—aren't you going now?" she asked, with elaborate indifference.

"Betty!" I cried, in injured virtue.

"My duty!"

"It's not your duty to—to stay where you are not wanted," answered Betty, warmly. "You don't like Mr. Burns, and—and——"

"What have my personal likes or wishes to do with it, Betty? When duty calls——"

"Mr. Burns——"

"—or Mr. Burns," I continued, airily, "I shall obey. And besides, this couch is very comfy."

"Please go," pleaded Betty.

"What will you give me?"

"Nothing; I will not *bribe* you," answered Betty, in fine contempt.

"If you want to stay and be mean——"

"The Toppers' dance comes off to-morrow night, Betty."

"What has that——?"

"And you are going, Betty; and I am going, Betty. Shall we say three waltzes, Betty?"

"Certainly *not*!" Silence. Mug snored. Footsteps on the gravel walk. I rearranged the cushions under my head.

"Perhaps one dance," began Betty.

"Oh, this is jolly nice!"

"Well, then, two; but——"

"So kind of stretchy. Don't you like to rizzle, Betty?"

"Quick, he's here! Three dances!"

"Let us be exact, Betty; three waltzes?"

"Oh, yes, yes!" whispered Betty.

I arose. Mug arose. Betty sat down. I nodded to the other chap. As I passed down the steps Betty jumped up.

"Why, Mr. Burns! Where *did* you come from?"

I blinked gravely at Mug. Mug blinked gravely back.

II

"MR. BURNS—" began Betty.

"One moment, please. Are you quite sure that I ought to hear this?"

"What do you mean?" asked Betty.

"These outpourings of your maiden heart, Betty; these confessions of a young and trustful soul."

"I don't know what you mean."

"Ah, Betty, I pray you do not embarrass me! Has—er—has the—the new flame—I mean, has Mr. Burns *spoken*, Betty?"

"No, he has not," answered Betty, with what seemed unnecessary warmth of tone and hauteur of expression. "The idea! And you may be quite sure that if he had I would not have told you!"

"You take a great load off my mind, my dear young lady."

"Off your *what*?" cried Betty, with lamentable irony.

"Let us not quarrel, Betty. Hark! the stringed instruments again give forth their sweetest melodies. Let

us haste away and mingle in the mazy dance."

"I don't care to mingle in the mazy dance," answered Betty, crossly.

"But this is my waltz, my second. If I lose this I shall have to have another. Allow me." I took Betty's card.

"But what is this? Where, oh, where is our young friend, Mr. Burns? His well-known initials are not here, Betty. Or is he masquerading under the symbol of 'G. H.' or 'Dick'?"

"If you had not interrupted me so rudely," answered Betty, "I should have told you that Mr. Burns is not here to-night. He was called to New York on business."

I whistled.

"Mr. Burns on business? What *is* his business, please, Betty?"

"He's in the hardware business," replied Betty, with the dignity becoming the mention of so solid and weighty a thing.

"Noble youth!" I murmured, as I wrote my initials after two waltzes and all the extras. "But ah, how glad am I that I am not in the hardware business!"

"Why?" asked Betty.

"Can you ask? Because, were I in the hardware business I might be far away from you, Betty! Far, far away! Perish the thought! It is enough to make me resolve never to earn my own living. Ah, I would rather starve by your side, Betty, than——"

"Well, if there is any danger of starving," interrupted Betty, "perhaps you will find Mr. Gould, and send him to me; I'm engaged to him for supper. And then run along and get something to eat yourself."

"Betty," I cried, indignantly, "it is not my—my in'ards that are starving, it's my heart!"

"How romantic," answered Betty, cruelly. "Try a glass of seltzer."

"Gould—Gould," I muttered, "I'm very much afraid I don't know Gould."

"Then you have a short memory," replied Betty. "You were playing tennis with him yesterday."

"Really? A short, lean, gray-haired chap, with—?"

"No, of course not. He's big and—*Please* go; we sha'n't be able to get near the supper-room."

"What matter? Let us stay here, Betty, in sound of the lulling waves, and feast our souls—"

"It's not my soul that's hungry, sir. *Please* go!"

"If I do, will you stay for all the extras?"

"Indeed, I will not!"

I folded my arms and stared into the night.

"Then we will starve together," I said, grimly.

"Please don't be horrid. You always make me bribe you to do everything. I'll stay for two extras if you'll find Mr. Gould at once."

"Two extras, forsooth! What are two extras to a man whose heart is famished?"

"Bother your heart," cried Betty.

"Make it five extras and Gould shall be here immediately. Say no, and—ha! ha!—here we shall stay until the last emaciated sandwich is gone and the last dish of pink ice is melted."

"I'll say *three* extras, then. Now go, please."

"And I may have them all?"

"You may dance every one of them."

"Betty, you're an—an—no, not an angel, Betty: you're a tramp. When in doubt—"

"Find Mr. Gould," prompted Betty.

I turned away. Then I paused, struck with a brilliant thought.

"Betty, if I don't find him, may I—that is—"

"No," answered Betty, decidedly, "you may not. So you might just as well find him."

"Betty," I pleaded, "he doesn't know your wishes as well as I. He doesn't know the kind of sandwiches you like. He doesn't guess that it takes twelve olives to satisfy your dainty hunger. And will he ask you to have a second or a third plate of salad? Not he! He would not dare; he thinks you are far, far too ethereal

to eat mere *food*. Betty, he will *starve* you."

The music ceased. Gowns rustled supperward. Betty paled.

"Quick!" she gasped. "Through the window!"

"But Gould?" I gasped.

"Bother Gould!" cried Betty. "Let's run!"

III

MUG was watching a troublesome fly out of the corners of his sleepy brown eyes. He flopped his tail languidly in greeting to me. If the sun did not keep Mug forever on the move over some ten feet of porch space, I am certain he would have long since worn a hole through the boards with that absurd tail of his.

"Good morning," said Betty, brightly, just as if nothing had happened. I sank dispiritedly upon the couch.

"Good morning," I answered, despondently. I wanted her to know that I was suffering; I wanted the whole world to know it.

"Isn't it a perfectly grand day?" asked Betty, as she drew a needleful of pink floss through a yard of white stuff.

"Do you think so?" I asked.

"Of course. Don't you?"

"I don't know. I haven't noticed. What is there about the day that is grand?"

"Why, the blue sky and the warm sun and the cool breeze, and—and—oh, everything, you know."

"Oh!"

Silence ensued. The Japanese cushion would not fit right against the back of my head. I sighed dolefully; there is nothing so telling as a well-delivered sigh, where the sympathy of the other sex is concerned. Mug had gone to sleep again. The ocean was frightfully noisy to-day. Betty laid down her—what she calls work.

"What is the matter?" she asked, sympathetically.

"Nothing, thank you."

"Oh, yes, there is," she answered, taking up her white stuff again and

smiling in the superior manner that women have when dealing with the sorrows of men. "I can easily tell when something is wrong. Life is a great big, gruesome tragedy, isn't it? And the weather is just awful, and they set the worst table over at the hotel that you ever saw, don't they? And you doubt if you have a friend in the world; and as for me—" Betty tried to whistle—a most absurd, futile and charming effort—"as for me, why, I'm the very incarnation of frivolity, hard-heartedness and fickleness; am I not?"

"Really, I don't understand," I responded, in a weary voice.

"Oh, yes, you do. Now, tell me all about it. Who is she?"

I made a great effort and managed to look reproachful; as a result Betty threw down her work and fell to laughing.

"I have a headache," I said, with dignity.

"I thought that was a woman's prerogative," answered Betty.

"Of course, if you doubt my word—"

"Gracious, no!" cried Betty. "But tell me more. Why?"

"Oh, of course, *you* don't know; *you* couldn't imagine! You haven't destroyed my belief in human nature, have you? You haven't played with my trusting heart like—like—a cat with a mouse, have you? Oh, certainly not!" I thought my intense sarcasm rather good, but Betty did not appear impressed to any great extent.

"Well, I don't feel flattered at being likened to a cat, but since you have a headache, I'll forgive you. And when did the wicked cat hurt the poor 'ittie mouse?"

"Betty, did you or did you not say that you would stay for all—no, three extras?"

"I did," answered Betty, solemnly.

"And did you or did you not say that I might have them all?"

"I did—not," answered Betty.

I sat up, trying to look like the popular conception of Nemesis.

"Betty!"

"What I said was," answered Betty, smilingly, "this: You asked if I would stay for three extras? I said I would. Then you asked if you could have them all? I answered that you might dance every one of them. But I didn't specify with whom."

"And you found that ass Gould and hid away somewhere?"

Betty nodded cheerfully.

"And I wandered about like—like—"

"A lion seeking whom you might devour."

"Betty, you trifled with me! You—you have hurt me!"

"I am very sorry," murmured Betty, contritely. I looked at her suspiciously. "But—but goodness knows, it was stupid enough in that horrid close reception-room. And Mr. Gould—" she sighed—"would talk about Apulieus. Who was Apulieus?"

I shook my head.

"I don't know, but I'm sure he is not a fit subject for discourse between Mr. Gould and you."

"I had doubts myself," owned Betty.

"And am I to understand that you—er—did not enjoy your wrong-doing?"

"Not a bit. I'd much rather have been dancing with—"

"With whom, Betty?" I asked, softly.

"With Mr. Burns or Mr. Townsend or you."

Silence again fell over the scene. I laid my head back on the cushions and groaned subduedly. I didn't look, but I knew Betty was touched by that groan.

"Though, of course, if I had danced with anyone it would have been with you, for I'd promised you—that is, in a way, you know."

I groaned again.

"You believe that, don't you?" asked Betty, anxiously.

"I don't know what to believe, Betty," I replied, forlornly.

"Does it ache *very* bad?" asked Betty, after a moment of silence.

"Terribly."

"Can I get—is there anything I can do?"

"You might—ouch!—you might move your chair a bit nearer, Betty. Your presence near me in this hour of trial——"

"Nonsense," said Betty. But the low rocker crept alongside.

"Is it—any better?" asked Betty, a few moments later.

"Lots. If I could hold the other one, too——"

"You old silly!" whispered Betty.

IV

"WON'T you sit down?" asked Betty.

Mug was chasing sand-flies in a state of intense excitement, and so paid no attention to my advent. I took a seat out of range of the flying sand, "sic-ed" him on to renewed exertions, and looked gravely at Betty.

"Begin," said I.

"Begin what?" asked Betty, in well-simulated surprise.

"What you want to tell me. Has Burns jilted you, or Gould blown his—ah—brains out? Has Powers asked you again, or—what was his funny name?—Rosebud——?"

"Blossom," corrected Betty.

"—or Blossom returned to cheer your solitude?"

Betty shook her head.

"No; he couldn't, you know; he's gone to Maine."

"Who, Burns?"

"No, Mr. Blossom."

"Oh!" I sighed, regretfully. "Then you'll have to tell me; I can't guess."

"But I don't want to tell you anything," cried Betty. "Not a thing."

I waited, carefully and artistically dog-eared the leaves of Betty's paper-covered novel. Betty looked out to sea earnestly, looked at Mug disapprovingly, looked at me impatiently. I had reached the forty-second page when she spoke.

"At least—that is——"

"Don't attempt to prepare me, Betty; I hate to be prepared. Tell me the worst at once."

"Mr. Burns—" I let the forty-fourth page flutter undog-eared and listened attentively—"Mr. Burns has—has—Mr. Burns has——"

"Spoken?"

Betty nodded, with her gaze fixed intently on the waves. I waited. Mug, having killed his seventeenth sand-fly, sighed luxuriously, walked around in a small circle five times, and sank to sleep with his head on my shoe. Betty found the waves very enthralling.

"And you—that is, Betty, you—er— In short——"

"Well," said Betty, hurriedly transferring her gaze for one delightful instant to my face, "he—he is very nice."

"Oh, undoubtedly."

"And so I said— And the hardware business is very respectable, isn't it? You know he's in the wholesale hardware."

"Indeed!"

"I don't see why you don't like him," said Betty, indignantly. "I'm sure he is always perfectly courteous to you."

"His manners are above criticism, Betty."

"And he—not that it matters, of course——"

"Oh, most certainly not!"

"But he is—well, he is quite well off, you know."

"Indeed! I congratulate him."

"Yes, his father is very rich."

"Then he has a father?"

"Why, of course."

"Scotch, doubtless; Burns—um—hot Scotch."

"I'll not tell you another thing," said Betty, "if you don't stop talking queer."

"There is more to tell, Betty?"

"Oh, yes. You see, I said the other day that if—he *did* ask me to—to——"

"Allow him to marry you."

"Yes, if he *did*, you know, that I wouldn't tell you. But I was angry at the time; and you are my friend, of course——" Betty paused. "You *are* my friend, aren't you?"

"I have that honor, Betty."

"And so—so I wanted you to know first of all."

"You are very thoughtful. I fear I don't deserve such—ah—consideration."

"Oh, yes, you do. Of course, you're real horrid *at times*——"

"Of course."

"But then, you don't mean to be; do you?"

"I fear I do, Betty."

Betty looked surprised at my candor.

"Anyhow, you deserve to be told."

"Really! Have I been as wicked as that?"

"And—and so I've told you."

"And so you've told me. And now, if we may be excused, Mug and I will go for a walk up the beach."

"A walk? But why——?"

I nodded toward the steps.

"Prince Charming approaches, Betty. And I don't believe he craves the companionship of either Mug or me. So——"

"But he—he won't mind your staying."

"But we should. Think of Mug's tender years! He is far, far too young to be made a witness to the approaching scene."

Betty blushed.

"Don't be silly. And please don't go."

"But Burns, Betty?"

"Mr. Burns," answered Betty, with fine dignity, "can have nothing to say to me that you are not at liberty to hear."

"Oh, I'm not thinking of myself, Betty; I'm hardened, in a way. You see, I've—well, I've known *you*, Betty. But Mug here——"

"Please sit down," pleaded Betty.

"Mug, the date of exile is postponed. You may sleep once more." But as Mug had not awakened, the permission was unnecessary. "Of course, Betty, I don't pretend to understand. But your word is law, and I stay, even if I incur the undying enmity of the future Mr. Betty."

"Now you're horrid again. And I won't tell you what I was going to."

"Which was?"

"That—that I haven't—that we aren't—I mean, I haven't given him an answer—yet."

"You haven't, Betty?"

Betty's cheeks were charmingly red, and she was striving to stare the ocean out of countenance. She shook her head.

"Is he coming for the—the answer now, Betty?"

Betty nodded.

"And it will be?"

"I—I don't know. I—I thought you would help me decide."

"But—but——"

"Oh, of course, if you don't care enough——"

"Care, Betty!"

There was a moment of silence. Betty's eyes were still on the ocean. Prince Charming approached. Mug stirred uneasily.

"Betty," I whispered, "suppose we let Mug decide!"

"Mug?" asked Betty, wonderingly.

"Mug," said I.

"Oh!" said Betty.

Mug opened his wicked little eyes and fixed them on the intruder. Then he arose, and his nose twitched comically as he sniffed the air. Somehow my hand met another in the shadow of the sunshade and clasped it tightly as the suspense grew.

Mug was very deliberate in forming an opinion.

Betty averred afterward that I emitted a low, sibilant sound, but I am quite sure that I did not. The hand in mine trembled.

And then Mug curled his lips back and growled.

The hand was drawn slowly away, and Betty's eyes met mine. I jumped up.

"How are you, Burns?" I cried, with unusual cordiality. "Sit down. Will you have a cigar?"

THE MAN IN THE WATCH

By Charles Stokes Wayne

KING made the tee very carefully and placed the little white sphere upon it.

"There!" he said, "hold your right knee stiff, keep your eye on the ball and follow through, and you'll clear the bunker as sure as shooting."

The girl, tall, rosy-cheeked and broad of back, slowly swung her driver well over her shoulder and, bending her body from the waist with the suppleness of a trained athlete, brought the club around with a swish that sent the rubber flying through the air like a bird.

"Beauty!" cried King, enthusiastically. "You are doing splendidly. If you drive like that to-morrow you'll win the tournament hands down."

An added color came to her face at his words, and her blue eyes beamed with pleasure.

"I should be stupid, indeed," she said, laughing, "not to improve under such a teacher! I really feel very much honored, Mr. King, that you should take the time and the trouble to go around with me."

King protested that the obligation was his.

"You're such a credit as a pupil," he added, "that I expect soon to be shining in your reflected glory. Fancy how, when you win the Women's Championship, the newspapers will say that Gerald King was at one time your preceptor! You see I'm not entirely unselfish in my devotion to your cause."

He dropped a ball on the teeing ground and, without hesitating a moment to address it, sent it speeding, swift and low, a full one hundred and seventy-five yards toward the next

putting green. King had been winning cups by the dozen on the Southern links during the Winter, and had arrived at Lakewood in the early spring, becomingly sunbrowned, as hard as nails and at the very top of his game. On the night of his coming he had met Helen Earle at a dance at the hotel, and their mutual interest in the ancient Scottish sport had done much to hasten to friendship what would probably otherwise have been a mere formal acquaintance. He had found her as modest as she was apt, and he took a genuine delight in giving her hints, that were almost directly reflected in her improved play.

At the end of a week, however, King began to experience an uneasiness that was part pleasure and part pain. By degrees he realized that Miss Earle's companionship was becoming more and more a necessity to him, and that on days when the rain fell in torrents and the wind blew in gusts, and golf—for her at least—was out of the question, he missed her far more than he missed the exercise.

From mutual friends he had learned that the Earles were among the wealthiest of the old Baltimore families, and he knew, from remarks that he had heard made by Miss Helen herself, that she had experienced nothing save the most luxurious side of life. She had on one occasion, too, he recalled, spoken of her two thus far ungratified ambitions—to own a steam yacht and a four-in-hand—and she had referred to them not as hopeless longings, but simply as desires deferred.

King was not a rich man in any sense of the word. He had a fair income from a fair business that allowed him a good deal of leisure, but steam yachts and four-in-hands were quite without the range of his possible possessions, and it was for this reason that his uneasiness was tinged with a pain that at times well-nigh obliterated the pleasure.

"It is half-past four," said Miss Earle, looking at a tiny diamond-studded watch that was pinned to her flannel shirt waist. "Shall we have time to finish out these nine holes before dark, do you think?"

King did not reply. The watch had attracted his attention for the first time, and he stood looking at it thoughtfully. He was trying to calculate what it must have cost.

"You shouldn't wear a thing like that on the links," he said, in a paternal tone; "you might lose it."

Helen laughed.

"I have no other," she replied, "and I hate to be without the time. I should not like to lose it, though." She looked at him archly. "There is a picture in the case that I would not take a great deal for."

"His picture?" he asked, with an assumption of nonchalance that he did not feel.

She nodded. "And it's a very good picture of him, too. I doubt if I could replace it."

King bit his lip.

"I daresay we can finish out the nine holes," he said, as he extracted her lofting mashie from the caddy bag and handed it to her. "You should make the green easily from here! A little more in front of the ball. That's it! You want to get a roll, you know."

"The man in the watch," he was saying to himself, "is the fellow that is going to buy her the steam yacht and the four-in-hand. How devilish lucky some fellows are!"

In playing to the seventh hole Miss Earle "sliced" into the wood on the right. The caddie found the ball beneath a dead bush, wedged in between a group of stones.

"Rather an awkward place," said King, "but if you'll put your arms in through this opening in the branches, I think you can get out safely enough with your niblick."

The girl went at her task like a thoroughbred. The stiff, dry boughs of the bush were as obstinate as a wire network, but she bent them back bravely and, with a knack that filled King with renewed admiration, cleverly spooned the ball out onto the fair green.

"To be able to get out of trouble successfully," he said to her, by way of encouragement, "is quite as important as to be able to drive, approach and put well."

"But one should never get into trouble," she corrected.

"Ah! But the best of us do that," he rejoined, with a half-smothered sigh, "whether we will or no. It's much easier to get into trouble than into—" he hesitated for a simile—"well, than into a pretty girl's watch case, for instance."

She was playing her third stroke now and had her back to him, so that he could not see the smile that dimpled her cheeks as she replied:

"You don't class watch cases as ordinary hazards, then?"

"Extraordinary, I should say. Watch cases and hearts are in a class by themselves."

A clean, strong brassey drive had carried her within twenty yards of the green, and as the two walked on together, the caddies leading the way, the young woman continued:

"And they are not easy to get into, you think?"

"Did I say that?"

"I inferred that that was your opinion."

"It's only the skilled player that gets into them. The duffer always falls short," he explained.

"And when the skilled player gets into such trouble—I suppose you'd call it trouble; extraordinary trouble, I think you said—"

"Trouble for the other fellow," interposed King.

"Does he," she continued, not

heeding his interruption, "usually, do you think, have much difficulty in getting out?"

"If he's a sensible man, he doesn't try."

"He ends his game there?"

"Exactly. Having up to that point been going around by himself—trying to beat his own record, perhaps—he quits, and starts over."

"Another lonesome?"

"A twosome."

They were putting on the ninth green, when Helen gave a little startled cry and King missed the hole by a half-inch.

"I've lost it!" she exclaimed.

"No, I've lost it," he replied; "I missed, and it's your hole."

"Oh, bother the hole!" she exclaimed, petulantly; "I mean I've lost my watch. Now, please don't say 'I told you so!'"

King was all solicitude in a moment.

"When do you remember last having it?" he asked.

"When I said it was half-past four, and you warned me about it."

"That was at the fifth tee. It's somewhere between here and there. I'll go back and look for it. Perhaps some of the players back of us have picked it up."

The girl suddenly evinced a nervousness that was unusual.

"Oh, no, no," she protested; "I couldn't think of troubling you to go. Let the caddies go. I'll offer them a reward to find it. How stupid of me!"

"It's no trouble at all," insisted King. "Wait in the clubhouse, and I'll be back with it inside of fifteen minutes."

"I'd much rather you let the caddies go."

"And I'd much rather go myself."

With which remark he started off with bent head to retrace the course they had taken in from the fifth teeing ground. Dusk was falling, and every minute the light grew more and more uncertain. Diligently he scanned every inch of turf for the missing timepiece. He stopped two parties to inquire of them if they had seen anything of it, but with no re-

sult. Then he began to think of the likely places. He realized that it could hardly have dropped from its fastening without some assistance, and he asked himself what could have lent this aid. In a second he remembered the ball "sliced" into the wood and the battle with the dead bush. When he reached the spot the shadows had deepened to gloom. He took out his matchbox and struck one match after another as he bent down to the search.

The flame of the fifth match was flickering to its finish when he spied a sparkle beneath a fallen twig. It was the reflected light in a facet of one of the diamonds with which the watch was encrusted.

Snatching up the truant, he thrust it into his pocket and started back at a brisk walk, delighted as a child over a new toy in his ability to restore to the girl he so much admired that which she evidently so greatly prized.

Then the thought that she prized it not so much for its beauty or its worth as for the picture that lay hidden back of that shield of diamonds came pounding in upon his memory, and a consuming desire filled him to see what manner of man this was that had chained her fancy. He stopped at a little bridge across a brook and took out his matchbox again and the watch. For a second he held them, hesitating. The temptation was strong upon him. She would never know. If it were not for the interest he had in her he should not care to see. She was going away in a week and he would probably never meet her again. What harm could there possibly be in his looking at the face of a man who could provide her with a steam yacht and a four-in-hand, not to speak of diamond watches and tiaras and brownstone fronts and automobiles and—and—?

Then, with a sudden impulse—with a realizing sense of shame at the mere thought of betraying a trust—he thrust the watch and the matchbox back into his pocket and trudged on across the bridge.

"After all," he said to himself,

cynically, as he hurried on to where the lights of the clubhouse now gleamed across the level green, "what is it to me what he looks like, the lucky devil? Fortunes, not faces, are the winners, and when a fellow hasn't much to boast of in either direction it's a mistake on the part of Providence to give him a heart."

Miss Earle was waiting in the great hall of the club. The evening was chill, and a log fire blazed in the wide chimney place.

"Oh, you dear!" she cried, in a tone that more than repaid King for his abnegation, "I can never thank you enough!"

"You'll find the picture all safe and sound," he said to her, with a sudden inclination to tease. "I was a little afraid that the case might have jolted open and the man in the watch have been lost out."

She looked at him quite seriously, while the color came and went in her cheeks. He thought she seemed a little startled and then embarrassed; and what struck him as particularly strange was that she turned away and stood looking into the flaming fireplace, without so much as a word in response. Could it be, he asked himself, that she imagined him guilty of having looked at the picture? It seemed to him now quite beyond the range of possibility that he should have been tempted even for one second to such perfidy.

He told one of the men to order his trap around and went into the locker-room for his overcoat.

The moon was shining when they climbed into the cart together, and the wind from the north had a frosty flavor.

"You are not angry, I hope," King ventured at last, breaking a silence that had become embarrassing.

"I don't think you had any right to look at that picture," she replied, nervously. "It was very silly of me to put it there, I know. I might have guessed someone would find it out some day, but I never fancied that—well, that you, of all people, would see it."

It was, then, as he had fancied. She did believe him guilty. He paused for a moment undecided whether to tell her the truth or to let her still labor under the misapprehension. The latter course promised some amusement, at least, and he therefore chose it.

"I don't see," he said, nonchalantly, "why I, of all people, should not have seen it."

"You don't?" she cried, with indignation in her voice. "Can't you realize how embarrassing it is for me?"

"Because I saw it?"

"Of course. I wouldn't have had you see it for worlds."

"You know you said it was *his* picture."

"Oh, how cruel you are!" she exclaimed, bitterly. "You almost make me hate you."

"And you think it a very good likeness?"

She did not answer.

"Why couldn't you replace it?" he went on, chuckling to himself—he felt that she should be punished for thinking him capable of prying into her private affairs. "I daresay he'd give you even a better one than that if you lost it."

Still she was silent.

"He's not a very good-looking fellow," he continued. "Where does his particular charm lie?"

"He hasn't any," she cried, passionately; "he is most ungentlemanly. I never imagined he could be so—so unkind," and then, before King realized the depth of the feeling he had stirred, she had her handkerchief to her face and was sobbing tumultuously.

He longed now to be able to place his arm about her waist, to draw her head down upon his shoulder, and to dry her tears with his kisses, but he realized that their acquaintance had not reached a stage where this form of consolation was permissible. He cursed himself for his lack of discretion, realizing that he had gone too far in his search for amusement and revenge, and yet in the midst of his distress over the pain he had caused

her he was torn by perplexity. Why, he wished to know, had she chosen this time, when her indignation against him was evidently at fever heat, to denounce the poor, innocent man in the watch, who, a brief hour before, was evidently high in her favor? Could it be that he had so aroused her wrath that she had turned against the sex collectively, even to the man whom she had so recently delighted to honor?

"I am very, very sorry, Miss Earle," King protested, while these thoughts were singing through his puzzled brain, "if I have teased you a little harshly. I'm sure I—I—" He wanted an excuse, but no excuse suggested itself. "You see," he went on, "I fancied that you might have done me the honor——"

"It was simply because you played golf so well," she interrupted, between her sobs. "You know what an enthusiast I am—and when I saw your picture in one of the illustrated weeklies I cut it out, and—and—and stuck it in my watch, and that is all there is about it."

King's heart leaped up into his throat. It was his picture, then, that was in the watch. *His* picture! There was no mistaking what the girl had meant when she nodded in answer to that question of his on the links.

He transferred the lines and whip to his right hand, and his left arm

suddenly circled Miss Earle's waist.

"I give you my word," he said, delighted to find she made no objection to the caress, "that I was simply talking in the air. I was a little put out that you should have thought me guilty of looking in the watch, you see—which I assure you I had no thought of doing—" he regarded this falsehood as quite permissible under the circumstances—"and I confess I did want to punish you; but you will forgive me, won't you? Say you will, Helen dear, and—and—" He drew her closer, so close that her head came against his shoulder quite naturally, "and if you think you might get on without that steam yacht and that four-in-hand, and be content with—well, say with the best set of golf clubs that can be turned out in the United States or the United Kingdom, why I'll stay right in those extraordinary hazards—*your* watch case and *your* heart—and we'll—you and I, you know—have a twosome that shall last through life."

"You wretch!" she laughed, looking up at him, as the cart swung onto the lake drive, and the moon peeped down between the budding branches of the trees, "to let me drive straight into a bunker and never warn me!"

"Not a bunker, dear," King answered, "just a road—the road to happiness."



A PROPER SENTIMENT

UPON his granite shaft, in chaste,
Bold letters beautiful,
His Wall street friends these letters placed:
"Here's hoping he's a bull!"



SHE KNEW

MAMMA—Willie, go and get your hair trimmed after school this evening.

WILLIE—Where shall I go, mamma?

EDITH (*six-year-old*)—Silly! to the mil'nery store, of course! That's where mamma gets all her trimmin' done.

ROMANCE, THEN AND NOW

WHEN knighthood was in flower
 And romance was a power,
 Sir Armad of ye Tower fared him forth in brave array;
 To join in tilt and tourney
 He doughtily did journey,
 Astride a coal-black charger in ye mediæval way.

Sir Armad's fearsome glower,
 When knighthood was in flower,
 Made caitiffs cringe and cower, when caitiffs he espied.
 His glance was grim and steady,
 His lance was poised and ready,
 And so he rode unhindered in his mediæval pride.

Within her lonely bower
 Ye ladye of ye Tower,
 When knighthood was in flower, sat and sighed with mien discreet,
 Until, ye tourney ended,
 Sir Armad homeward wended
 To lay his hard-won trophies at her mediæval feet.

But, ah, those personages
 That in the Middle Ages—
 As knights and squires and pages trod the paths of chivalrie
 When knighthood was in flower—
 Lived out their little hour,
 For modern man and knighthood in the present don't agree.

He bids good-bye to Dolly,
 To Molly or to Polly,
 And forth upon the trolley fares to battle in the Street.
 There brokers glare and glower—
 When knighthood was in flower
 Sir Armad ne'er had half so many fearsome foes to meet.

But think ye Lady Dolly
 Succumbs to melancholy
 Because the clanging trolley hath borne away her mate?
 Not she! In tweed and plaidie,
 Attended by a caddie,
 She hies to try her prowess in the tourney up to date.

And when, a lucky winner,
 She meets her lord at dinner
 And gaily doth begin her achievements to relate,
 No ladye of ye Tower,
 When knighthood was in flower,
 Was ever half so hungry in her mediæval state.

JENNIE BETTS HARTSWICK.

THE WAY OF A MAID WITH A MAN

By Richard Marsh

(Miss Whitby writes to her mother.)

MY DEAREST MAMMA—You will be surprised, and I hope you will be pleased, to hear that I am engaged to be married! You are not to smile—it would be cruel—this really is serious. Charlie is all that a husband should be—you are not to laugh at that—you know exactly what I mean. I am nearly twenty, and this time I feel that my happiness really is at stake. I may not be able to keep my looks for long—some girls lose them when they are quite young—and something seems to tell me that I ought to begin to look life seriously in the face, and become responsible. I almost wish that I had taken to district visiting, like Emma Mortimer—it might have balanced me. Poor Emma! what a pity she is so plain.

Will you mind hinting to Tom Wilson that I think he might be happy with Nora Cathcart? It is true that I made him promise that he would never speak to her again, but all that is over. I hope you will not think me fickle, dear mamma. I enclose the ring Tom gave me. Will you please give it to him? And point out to him that I am now persuaded that boy and girl attachments never come to anything serious.

By the way, do not forget to tell them to send two pairs of evening shoes. Those which I have are quite worn out. Let both pairs be perfectly plain bronze. Charlie thinks that they make my feet look almost ethereal. Is he not absurd? But I hope that you will not think so when you come to know him, for he loves your child. You might also ask them to send me a dozen pairs of stockings

—nice ones. All mine seem to be in holes. You know I like them as long as you can get them.

I have been here nearly a month, and I have been almost engaged to three different men. How time does seem to fly! Lily says I am a heartless little flirt. I think that perhaps I was, until *he* came. He has been here just a week, and I seem to have known him years.

Lily seems to be under the impression that I was engaged to Captain Pentland. She is wrong. Captain Pentland has some very noble qualities. He is destined to make some true woman profoundly happy. Of that I have no doubt whatever. But I am not that woman. No, dear mamma, I feel that now. Besides, he wears an eyeglass. As you are aware, I have always had an insuperable objection to an eyeglass. It seems to savor of affectation. And affectation I cannot stand. And then he lisps. As I told you when I wrote you last, when I sprained my ankle on Highdown Hill, he carried me in his arms for over a mile. Of course, I was grateful. And, between you and me, dear mamma, he held me so very closely to him, that, afterward, I felt as if I ought to marry him. I have explained everything to Charlie. He quite agrees with me that it is absurd for Captain Pentland to think himself ill-used.

While I think of it, when you are in town will you tell them to send me a box of assorted chocolates? You know the kind I like. There is nothing of that sort to be had here, and I do so long for some.

Charlie is Lily's cousin. Do you

think that cousins ought to kiss each other? I wish I could get the opinion of someone on whose judgment I could implicitly rely. At any rate, even supposing that they ought, I am quite sure that there should be limits. Before long I am afraid that I shall have to give Charlie a hint that I do not think, under the circumstances, that he ought to kiss Lily quite as much as he does me. She may be his cousin, but she is young, and she is pretty. And cousins are not sisters. It is nonsense for people to pretend they are.

The odd part of it is that if Charlie had not been so fond of kissing Lily I might not be going to marry him now. I knew that he was coming. And I was sitting alone in the drawing-room, in a half-light, with my back to the door, when suddenly someone, putting his arm round my waist, lifting me, right off my feet, twisted me right round, and began kissing me on my eyes and lips and everywhere.

I thought it was Captain Pentland, though I was astonished at such behavior even from him, because it was only that morning we quarreled. You may judge of my astonishment when I was again able to look out of my own eyes to find myself being held, as if I were a baby or a doll, in the arms of a perfect giant of a man whom I had never seen before. You may imagine how shocked I felt, because, as you know well, my views on such subjects—which I owe to your dear teaching—are, if anything, too severe. I will do him the justice to admit that he seemed to be almost as much shocked as I was.

"I beg your pardon," he said, "ten thousand times. I thought that you were Lily."

He put me down very much as you handle your Chelsea cups, mamma—softly and delicately, as if he had been afraid of chipping pieces off me.

"I suppose you're Charlie?"

I spoke more lightly and more cheerfully than I felt. He seemed so ashamed of himself, and so confused, that I pitied him. You know, dear

mamma, that when people know and feel that they have done wrong I always pity them. I cannot help it. It is my nature. All flesh is weak. I myself am prone to err. When Lily did appear, we were talking quite as if we knew each other. And that is how it began. It is odd how these sort of things sometimes do begin. As you are aware, I speak as one who has had experience. I shall always believe that it was only the breaking of a shoelace that first brought Norman Eliot and me together.

But those chapters in my life are closed. In the days that are past I may have seemed to hesitate, to occasionally have changed my mind. But now my life is linked to Charlie's by bonds which never shall be broken. I feel as if I were already married. The gravity of existence is commencing to weigh upon my mind. A woman when she is nearly twenty is no longer young.

While I remember it, when you send the chocolates don't send any walnuts. I am sick of them. Various flavored creams are what I really like. And let two pairs of the stockings be light blue, with bronze stripes high up the leg.

I cannot truly say that Lily is behaving to me quite nicely in my relations with Charlie. I do not wish to wrong her, even in my thoughts—she is the very dearest friend I have!—but sometimes I cannot help thinking that she had an eye on Charlie for herself, because when, the other morning, I was telling her how strongly I disapproved of cousins marrying, if she had not been Lily—whose single-hearted affection I have every faith in—I should have said that she was positively rude. Charlie only proposed to me last night, yet, although she must have seen what was coming, in the afternoon she was actually talking to me of Norman Eliot—as if I had been to blame! Mr. Eliot and I never really were engaged—some people jump to conclusions without proper justification. And am I compelled to answer a person's letters if, for reasons of my own—

quite private reasons—I do not choose to?

She came to my bedroom last night, just as I was going to bed. I told her what Charlie had said, and what I had said. Of course, I expected her to congratulate me—as, in circumstances such as mine, a girl's best friend ought to do. She heard me to an end, then she looked at me and said:

"So you've done it again!"

"I don't know about again, dear Lily," I replied. "But it would seem as if I had done it at last. I am feeling so happy that it almost makes me afraid."

"Some girls would feel afraid if they had reason to be conscious of the fact that they had engaged themselves to marry three men at once."

I could not help but notice that a jarring something was in her tone. But I paid no heed to it. My thoughts were elsewhere.

"How wrong it is," I murmured, "for people to scoff at love. They cannot know what love is—as I do."

"Perhaps not. I should think that what you don't know about love, May, isn't worth knowing."

I sighed.

"I fancy, Lily dear, that I have heard stories about you."

"I dare say; but I never snapped up your favorite cousin from under your nose. Possibly you will not mind telling me if you do mean to marry one of them, and if so which."

"Lily! How can you ask me such a question? Have I not just been telling you that there is only one man in the world for me, henceforth and forever, and that his name is Charlie?"

"Exactly. Only last week you told me precisely the same story, and his name was Jim, while about a fortnight ago it was Norman."

My dearest mamma, you see I am making a clean breast of everything to you. I own, quite candidly, that since I have been here I have not behaved precisely as I might have done, and, indeed, ought to have done. I do not know how it is, I meant to be good; I am sure that nothing could have been better than my resolutions.

I had no idea that they could have been so easily broken. It only shows, after all, how fragile we are. I felt that, strange and sad though it seems, Lily was not wholly unjust. I got up from my chair, and I knelt at her feet, and I pillowed my head in her lap and I cried:

"Oh, Lily, I've been so wicked! You can't think how sorry I am, now that it's too late. I wish you'd help me, and tell me what I ought to do."

"I'm a bit of a dab at a cry myself," she said. "So, if you take my advice, to begin with you'll literally dry up."

Was it not unkind? And was it not vulgar? But I sometimes think that Lily's heart is like the nether millstone—so hard, you know. She went on:

"If you do mean business with Charlie, and you do want my advice, you'll just tell him everything you have been doing, and leave the solution of the situation to him."

I made up my mind there and then that that was exactly what I would do. I resolved that I would have no secrets from my husband—particularly as he would be sure to be told them by unfriendly lips if he did not learn them from mine. Besides, in such matters a man is so much more generous and so much more sympathetic than a woman—especially *the* man. Nor does he value you any the less because he finds that someone else happens to value you a little, too.

So, directly Lily had gone, I let my hair down and I put on my light blue dressing-jacket and a touch of powder, and I waited. Presently I heard steps coming along the passage. I opened the door. Sure enough, it was Charlie, just going to bed. At sight of me he started. I was conscious that I was, perhaps, acting with some imprudence. But I could not help it. My entire happiness was at stake. You know, dear mamma, that I do look nice in that pretty dressing-jacket, with my hair not at all untidy, but simply let down. You yourself have told me that, in every sense of the word, I look so young. He held out

his hands to me—under a misapprehension. I shrank back.

"Mr. Mason," I began, very softly, with, in my voice, a sort of sob, "I could not rest until I had told you that all that has passed between us to-night must be considered as unsaid."

He started as if I had struck him. I could see that his face went white.

"Miss Whitby! May! What do you mean?" He seemed to gasp for breath. "After all, it is only natural that you should not love a great hulking idiot such as I am."

"You are mistaken. You are not a great hulking idiot. And I do love you. I shall never love anyone but you. It is you who will not love me when you have heard all I have to say."

"What nonsense are you talking?"

Again he held out his arms to me, and again I shrank away.

"It is not nonsense. I wish it were. So far is it from being nonsense that I felt I could not be at peace until my conscience was unburdened." I paused. I felt the crucial moment was arriving. My voice sank lower. "Someone else was staying here before you came."

"Yes, I know; Lily told me—a man named Pentland."

"Oh, Lily told you so much, did she? Did Lily also tell you that the man named Pentland had bad taste enough to fancy that he had fallen in love with me?"

"Bad taste, you call it. I know nothing about the man, but there evidently can be no sort of doubt about his perfect taste."

"But, Charlie—I mean Mr. Mason—"

"You don't—you mean Charlie."

Dear mamma, once more I sighed. I perceived that it would have to be. Some men are so dictatorial.

"The worst of it is that he worried and worried me so—I was staying in the same house, and couldn't get away from him, you see—that he made me almost think I cared for him. But now you have come, and made me see what a mistake it was."

"My little love."

For the third time he held out his arms to me. And this time he took me in them. I could not find it in my heart to resist him any longer; it might be the last time he would ever hold me there. I continued my remarks with my head not very far away from his waistcoat. He smoothed my hair, very softly, with his great right hand.

"Unfortunately, I am not at all sure that Captain Pentland does not think that, in a sort of way, I am engaged to him. Oh, Charlie, whatever shall I do?"

"Tell him the truth. Say that you're sorry for him, poor chap, but even the best regulated girls will make mistakes. I'm the mistake you've made."

I was silent. Then I whispered:

"Will you forgive me?"

"It strikes me that it is I who ought to ask you to forgive me for not having been the first to come upon the scene."

This was throwing a new light upon the subject. It had not occurred to me to look at it from that point of view before. But I had not come to the end of my confessions. Dear mamma, how careful we women ought to be! It is these crises in our lives which make us feel what short-sighted mortals we actually are.

"Before Captain Pentland came—"

I was pulling at one of the buttons on his waistcoat as I spoke, and I realized what a big heart Charlie's must be, if it was at all in proportion to his chest—"another friend of Lily's was stopping in the house."

"Ye-es."

I could not help but be conscious of a certain hesitation in his pronunciation of the word.

"His name was Eliot."

"Well?"

There had been a moment's silence before he spoke. And when he had spoken there ensued a portentous pause. I hid my face still more from his examining gaze. My voice seemed almost to die away.

"He, also, professed to bestow on me the gift of his affection."

"The devil he did!"

Yes, mamma, that was precisely what he said. It made me shiver. But he was sorry as soon as the words had passed his lips.

"Forgive me! I didn't mean it! After all, it is only to be expected that every man who sees you will fall in love with you at sight."

I wondered if he would talk to me like that in years to come. Do husbands of ten years' standing say such things unto their wives? Oh, how ashamed of myself I felt as I thought of what I still had to admit! Dear mamma, I will try hard never again to do what my conscience tells me is not right. If only we would always listen to the still small voice which seeks to guide us!

"Charlie, you have no notion how foolish I've been! Until you came I had no proper conception of the actualities of existence. Mr. Eliot caused me to confuse the issues, just as Captain Pentland did."

He held me out a little way in front of him, trying to look into my face. I was careful not to let him see too much of it. I hung down my head with what, I do hope, mamma, was proper penitence.

"Let me know clearly where we are, little girl. Am I to understand you to say that both these men asked you to marry them?"

"I am afraid, Charlie, that you are to understand something of the kind."

"And that you gave both of them encouragement?"

I looked up at him—such a look, mamma! My eyes were swimming in tears. I knew he would not tell me to "dry up." My heart seemed to be rising to my lips.

"Not real encouragement. I never

gave anyone real encouragement, Charlie, till I knew you. Even in your case I fear I ought to have been more reticent. But you cannot have the least idea of what a wide world of love you seem to have opened out to me. Won't you forgive me for encouraging you?"

Dear mamma, he collapsed. Of what took place during the moments which immediately followed, I can give you no definite description. I know I began to think that the end of the world had come. When he had quite finished, he said:

"Look here, young lady, what is past is past. We will make no further allusions to what took place before the war. But in the future, perhaps you will kindly manage not, as you put it, to confuse the issues, but will continue to confine yourself to encouraging me."

Was it not noble of him? And so sweet! I am persuaded that his character is one of singular beauty.

Dear mamma, the passages which ensued were too sacred even for your dear eyes. When he left me I feel certain it was to dream of me. I know that all night long I dreamt of him. And on my knees beside my bed I registered a vow that in the time to come I will be as good as I possibly can.

Do not forget the shoes, and the stockings, and the chocolates! And do give Tom his ring! I am registering this letter, so you are sure to get it safe.

I will bring, or send, Charlie to you, on approval, whenever you please.

I am, my dearest mamma,

Your ever loving daughter,

MAY.

SHE COULDN'T WAIT

JACK—I started to propose to Miss Elderly last night.

SHE—Were you interrupted?

"Yes; she accepted me."

THE BENEDICT'S LAMENT

IN that lost land of Arcady
 (Would I could find a map thereof!)
 Reigned exquisite simplicity
 (One paid no house rent for a grove);
 The maid to whom one gave his love
 Wore daisies with a homespun dress,
 Nor knew a jewel from a glove—
 Ah, to have wed a shepherdess!

Since I espoused my Caroline
 My education is complete;
 The manicurist comes at nine
 (See little bill for hands and feet);
 At ten a female, prim and neat
 (My lady's locks *her* arts confess);
 At twelve her modiste joins the suite—
 Ah, to have wed a shepherdess!

That little maid Arcadian,
 She wore no *lingerie* of lace—
 Her one extravagance, a span
 Of ribbon blue her crook to grace;
 No poor cosmetic found a place
 Upon her cheeks' round loveliness—
 In morning dew she washed her face—
 Ah, to have wed a shepherdess!

L'ENVOI

Bills, that plague not the bachelor,
 Ye mock a Benedict's distress,
 Who mutters, as he counts you o'er,
 "Ah, to have wed a shepherdess!"

THEODOSIA GARRISON.



A MATTER OF ECONOMY

BINGO—I think, after all, I shall go to Europe with my family.
 TWICKENHAM—Why, I thought you couldn't afford it?
 "Well, it's cheaper for me to go with them than to let them go alone."